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THE
OUTPOURING
OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT;

OR,

THE PROSPEROUS STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN INTEREST
BEFORE THE END OF TIME, BY A PLENTIFUL
EFFUSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

CONSIDERED IN FIFTEEN SERMONS ON EZEKIAL XXXIX. 29,

BY REV. JOHN HOWE, M.A.

LONDON:

RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,

Instituted 1799.

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW;
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

1835.

BT122
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List of Dr. J. M. Mahan

P R E F A C E

BY THE REV. DR. JOHN EVANS.

TO THE READER.

I APPREHEND little occasion to make an apology for the publication of the following discourses. They who relish Mr. Howe's inimitable spirit of piety, judgment, copiousness, and force in the management of every subject he hath undertaken, will be glad of any remains of so great a man; and those who have been conversant with his writings, will hardly want any other voucher, besides the sermons themselves, that they are genuine, they so evidently carry in them, to a person of taste, the marks which always distinguish his performances.

They have not indeed had the advantage of his own masterly hand to prepare them for the press, and to give them their last finishing, but they are his discourses from the pulpit, taken first in short-hand by the hand of a very ready and judicious writer, who afterwards copied them out fair with the minutest exactness, as they were delivered. This very precise accuracy made it necessary that they should be transcribed anew, before they saw the light. This I have adventured to do, without the alteration or addition of any one thought. But, in discourses delivered by a preacher without notes, some repetitions naturally occur in the pulpit; and very usefully, to enable the hearer to discern the connexion

of the discourse as he goes along, and to make the deeper impression : these might appear tedious to a reader, who hath the whole before him ; and therefore are omitted, farther than they seemed to carry a peculiar emphasis, or than a different representation of the same thought was apprehended to convey the idea with greater force. The writer appears to have religiously followed the very words of the author, when he cited passages of scripture by memory : it was judged proper to consult the texts themselves, and to cite them as they lie in the bible ; except where the author might be supposed out of choice to substitute another English word, as more expressive of the sense of the original. The repetition also of former discourses at the beginning of another sermon hath been omitted where nothing new occurred. But where a new thought is suggested, in such a repetition, it hath been carefully inserted in its proper place. This is all the variation I have allowed myself to make from the copy ; and so much I apprehend will be accounted reasonable and necessary by all that are acquainted with such things.

The subject can hardly fail to be particularly acceptable. The reverend author hath often indeed expressed in general the same catholic sentiments in several of the works which he published himself ; and shown his mind to have been uniformly the same as nere, upon that head, wherein the prosperity of the christian interest lies : that it consists not in the advancement of any party among christians as such, or of any distinguishing name, or in any mere external forms ; but in real vital religion and conformity to God. He hath also more than once intimated his expectation of better times for

the church of God, than the present state of it. But he hath no where so professedly and distinctly explained his sentiments concerning the latter days of the christian church, as in these discourses.

They were all preached in the course of a Wednesday-lecture, which he formerly kept up at Cordwainers'-hall in this city ; and all within the year 1678, as appears by the dates prefixed to each : a time, wherein he was in the vigour of life and height of judgment, between forty and fifty years old ; and within a few years after his settlement with that congregation of protestant dissenters, where he ministered till his death. That was a time of peculiar distress and danger, not only to protestants out of the legal establishment in these kingdoms, but to the reformed interest in general through Europe. This may be supposed to have engaged his thoughts in so long attention to this subject, which animates with the hope of better times to come.

There are other discourses immediately preceding these at the same lecture, concerning the work of the Spirit in every age upon particular persons ; as these relate to his work upon the christian community, to be expected in the last age. A copy of those sermons, drawn up by the same writer, is fallen into the hands of a very worthy brother of this city, by as unexpected a providence as these came into mine. I hope he may be prevailed with to introduce them into the world, if those which are now offered meet with a favourable reception.* And both these volumes together, will contain the sum of this great man's sentiments concerning the important doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

* They were published and are inserted in Hunt's edition of Howe's Works.

If any inquire, why these sermons were not inserted in the late collection of Mr. Howe's works in folio; I answer: beside that it was resolved to insert none there, but those which he had published himself; so, if it had been thought proper to add more, the copy of these came not into my hands or within my notice, till that edition was made public.

Such an index cannot be judged needful to a particular discourse, as I thought proper to add to that collection, where the subjects treated of are so various. It appeared more useful here to give a view of his whole scheme upon the argument, by way of contents.

May the great Lord of the harvest succeed the revived labours of our fathers, and the endeavours of those in the present age, who are called to serve him in the gospel; and still raise a seed to serve him, both in the ministry and out of it, which from time to time shall be accounted to him for a generation. This is the hearty prayer of

An unworthy servant of
our common Lord,

JOHN EVANS.

Prescot-street, Dec. 6th, 1725.

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SERMON I.

PREACHED MAY 8, 1678.

EZEKIEL XXXIX. 29.

NEITHER WILL I HIDE MY FACE ANY MORE FROM THEM : FOR
I HAVE POURED OUT MY SPIRIT UPON THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL,
SAITH THE LORD GOD.

THE operations of the Holy Ghost may be considered, either as relating to particular persons, in a single and private capacity ; for the regenerating of souls, or implanting in them the principles of the divine and spiritual life ; the maintaining of that life ; the causing and ordering all the motions that are proper thereunto : or as having an influence upon the felicity and prosperous state of the church in general. For this last the scripture that I have pitched upon gives us a very plain and sufficient ground.

It is manifest, that it is a very happy and prosperous state which is here referred unto, if you look back upon this and the foregoing chapters, Ezek. xxxvi. xxxvii. and xxxviii. which are all of the same kind, and as it were of a piece with this. You find such things copiously spoken of and promised, as we are wont to consider in the constitution of a prosperous, happy state, in reference to what their case required ; reduction from captivity, victory over their enemies,

abundant plenty of all things, settled tranquillity and peace, entire union among themselves, both Ephraim and Judah, as you will find it expressed; the renewal of God's covenant with them, after their so great and long-continued defection and apostacy from it; in which covenant he would be their God, and take them for his people, and have the relation avowed and made visible to all the world, that he and they were thus related to one another. These things you may find at large in the several chapters mentioned; importing all the favour that we could suppose any way conducive to make a people happy. And indeed the same thing is compendiously and summarily held forth in the words of the text themselves: "Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." We cannot, in few words, have a fuller account given of a happy state.

To consider these words themselves; the contents of them are, 1. A gracious prediction: "Neither will I hide my face any more from them." A prediction, or prophetic promise, or a promissory prophecy of a most happy state. And, 2. The reason given hereof why God would provide that all things should be well with them in other respects: "For I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God."

There are two things that must be the matter of a little previous inquiry, in order to our taking up what we are to insist upon from this scripture. 1. The import of this negative expression, "Neither will I hide my face any more from them." And, 2. How we are to understand the subject of the promised favour here, as it is designed by this name.

“the house of Israel.” These things being cleared, the matters that I intend to recommend to you and insist upon, will plainly result.

I. As to the former, what this negative expression should mean, “Neither will I hide my face any more from them.” It is needful, that we may understand that, to know what the scripture doth often mean, and may well be supposed to mean here, by the “face” of God. It is very plain, that it frequently means his providential appearances, or the aspect of providence one way or another. And thus we are more frequently to understand it when it is spoken of in reference to a community, or the collective body of a people; yea, and sometimes when in reference to particular persons too. And hence it will easily appear how we are to take the opposite expressions, of his making his face to shine; or of his hiding, or covering, or clouding his face.

It appears from sundry scriptures, that by his showing his face, or letting it be seen, giving the sight of it, or causing his face to shine, giving the pleasant sight of it, or lifting up the light of his countenance, (expressions of the same import,) the favourable aspect of providence is to be understood, when these expressions are used, as I said, more especially in reference to the collective body of a people. And so the “hiding of his face” signifies as much as the change of these more favourable aspects of providence, for those that are more severe and that do import anger and displeasure. For so, by the aspects and appearances of providence, it is to be understood whether God be propitious and favourably inclined toward a people, or whether he be displeased and have a controversy with them: as

it may be discerned in the face of a man, whether he be pleased or displeased. Wherefore you have anger and severity, which is usually signified by providence, and as it is so signified, held forth to us under this same phrase or form of speech. "I will surely hide my face in that day, for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods," Deut. xxxi. 18. See what the expression there is explanatory of, or with what other phrases it is joined, as manifestly intending the same thing; such as his anger being kindled against them, and his forsaking them. It is interspersed among such expressions again and again. So ver. 17. "My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them; and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not amongst us?" In the same sense the word is used Deut. xxxii. 20. and in many other scriptures, in reference to bodies of men. And sometimes in reference to a particular person; as in Job xxxiv. 29. "When he gives quietness, who shall give trouble? and when he hides his face, who shall behold him?" Who dare behold him when clouds and frowns do eclipse that bright and pleasant light of his countenance before lifted up, whether it be against a nation or a particular person? as there Elihu speaks. And he had been speaking before of the acts of Providence, in lifting up and casting down at his pleasure, and according as men's ways and deportment towards him in this kind or that did make it most suitable and fit. And therefore also the church, being represented as in a very afflictive

condition, exposed to the insultations of tyrannous enemies, and having suffered very hard and grievous things from them; this is the petition that is put up in the case, “Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved,” *Psa. lxxx. 3. 19.*

Therefore it is obvious to collect what the like expression here must mean, “Neither will I hide my face any more from them.” It must mean, that he would put them into a prosperous condition; the course of his providence toward them should be such as would import favour and kindness to them. And, “Neither will I hide my face any more from them,” imports the permanency and settledness of this happy and prosperous state; that it should not be a short lucid interval only, but through a very considerable and continued tract of time this should be the posture and course of his providence towards them. And then,

II. For the subject of this promised favour, as it is designed here by the expression, “The house of Israel.”

1. I doubt not but that it hath a meaning included, as it is literally taken, of that very people wont to be known by that name, the house of Israel, the seed of Jacob.

2. But, I as little doubt that it hath a further meaning too. And it is an obvious observation, than which none more obvious, that the universal church, even of the gospel-constitution, is frequently in the prophetic scriptures of the Old Testament represented by this, and by the equivalent names of Jerusalem and Zion, and the like. And the reason was as obvious as the thing itself; for they were the church of God, that people, and they who were

proselyted to them. and the prophecies of the Old Testament we know were first and most immediately directed to them; and were more likely to be regarded by them, by how much the more the church whom these prophecies did concern, was more constantly designed or set forth by their own name. It invited them to look towards the great things represented and held forth in these prophecies, as things wherein they had a special concern, and wherein their interest was bound up; though they had no reason to think that they were things appropriate to them. And we find that in the New Testament too the name is retained: All are not Israel, that are of Israel. "He is not a Jew, that is one outwardly," Rom. ii. 28. He means certainly a christian. "I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not," Rev. ii. 9. And we have little reason to doubt, and there will be occasion to make it more apparent hereafter, that so we are to explain the signification of this name here; not to exclude the natural Israelites, but also to include the universal christian church.

These things being thus far cleared, the ground will be plain, upon which to recommend to you a twofold truth from these words; namely.

FIRST. THAT THERE IS A STATE OF PERMANENT SERENITY AND HAPPINESS APPOINTED FOR THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH OF CHRIST UPON EARTH.

SECOND. THAT THE IMMEDIATE ORIGINAL AND CAUSE OF THAT FELICITY AND HAPPY STATE, IS A LARGE AND GENERAL EFFUSION OR POURING FORTH OF THE SPIRIT.

It is the latter of these that I principally intend, and shall speak more briefly to the former.

But before I speak distinctly and severally to either of them, I shall do what is not usual with me; that is, entertain you a while with somewhat of a preface, to give you therein an account in reference to both, and of the whole of the intended discourse upon this subject, what I design, and upon what score I think it useful and proper, that such a matter as this is, be entertained into your consideration and my own. Herein I shall,

I. Lay before you sundry things obvious unto the consideration of considering persons, that will serve for some representation of the state of the christian church hitherto, and at this time, and as it may continue to be for some time hence.

II. I shall show you in some other particulars, what it is reasonable should be designed and expected in a discourse of this nature, and upon such a subject as this is, in way of accommodation to such a state of the case.

I. As to the former; these things I reckon very obvious to such as are of considering minds:

1. That the state of the christian church hath been for the most part very calamitous and sad all along hitherto, in external respects. You know it was eminently so in the time of the first forming of the christian church. The christian name was a name every where spoken against; and they that delivered themselves up to Christ, delivered themselves up to all manner of troubles and persecutions, even upon his account and for his name's sake. He foretold it unto his more immediate followers, that for his name they should be hated of all men; and they were to expect the most malignant hatred; and he told them too of the effects agreeable and suitable to such a principle. The church was externally miserable in the first

ages of it by persecutions from without: and after it arrived to a state of some tranquillity and peace, by the favour of the world and its more gentle aspect upon it; after there was an emperor of the christian religion, that would own and patronise it against the rage and fury that it was pursued with before; then it soon bred trouble enough within itself, and grew factious and divided, and broken into parts, pestered with heresies, and filled with varieties of contending opinions and sects; and then these were continually the authors of troubles to one another, according as one or another could get opportunity to grasp power into its hand. This hath been the state of things with it all along, though there have been some more quiet intervals here and there, in this or that part of the christian world. It can hardly be said, the church hath ever had any considerable season of tranquillity and serenity, universally, and all at once, even in any time.

2. It is more obvious, as we may suppose, unto the most, that the state of the church is externally very miserable and sad at this time. Those who understand any thing of the world, cannot but know so much; and we need not to except that part of the church at home, as you all well enough know. In other countries christians are rolling and weltering in one another's blood; and you know the shattered state of things within ourselves.

3. By the present posture of affairs, the position and aspect of things, we cannot say that matters are in a tendency unto a better state; but have rather reason to fear that all will grow worse and worse. Clouds gather and thicken, and grow blacker and blacker, and spread far and wide over the church of Christ in the world, and are very likely to discharge

into very tremendous storms. According to human probabilities and experience nothing else is to be expected.

4. It is to be observed too, that there hath long been a retraction in a very great measure of the Spirit from the church. There was a gradual retraction soon after that large effusion of it at first in the apostles' days; unto which in Acts ii. we find by Peter that scripture in Joel applied, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Then they said it had its accomplishment; though I doubt not it is to have another and fuller accomplishment; as it is no unusual thing for the same prophetic scripture to be said to be fulfilled again and again: as that passage, "Out of Egypt I have called my Son," applied to the people of Israel and to Christ. A long-continued retraction there hath been of that Spirit, which is the very life of that body, whose work and business it is to act and animate it in every part. We are not now inquiring concerning the cause of the retraction. Much must be referred to sovereign pleasure, more to justice; for undoubtedly God hath proceeded according to the tenour of his own rule, "I will be with you as long as you are with me;" and he did never in any degree leave his people first that bare his name. Union always begins on his part, breaches on ours. But notwithstanding that large effusion of the Spirit at first, when the gospel light first dawned upon the world, and that pleasant spring of the christian interest and religion that then appeared and showed itself; how gradual was the languor, that set it a fainting and withering by steps and degrees, very discernible to those who look upon the histories of former days! though yet the life and

vigour was still much preserved, as long as the church was in a suffering state from without by the persecution of paganish enemies ; as we know it was for the three first centuries and more, in some degree and in some part of it.

But after once the world came to cast more benign aspects upon it, how soon did the life and vigour of the christian church evaporate and expire ! So as that there seemed to be a body left in a great measure destitute of a soul ; to allude to the expression that the prophet Jeremiah uses to the people of Israel, “ Be instructed lest my soul depart from you.” The very soul of the church was in a great measure departed ; departed unto that degree, that it was become such a mere piece of formality, that another religion takes the advantage to vie with the christian ; the most fabulous, the most vain, the most despicable, that could be invented ; and of the most despicable original ; from Mahomet, a mean, inconsiderable, ignorant, illiterate man ; but a common soldier at the first, and yet the author of a religion so vastly spread in the world as it is at this day, and even so as to eat out christianity in so considerable parts where it had obtained and taken place. This was argument enough of a great retraction of that Spirit that made the christian church and religion, while it was more visibly breathing, a mighty, majestic, awful, commanding thing.

About that time, when the apostacy in the christian church became more visible, and the usurpation of “ the man of sin” more explicit and avowed ; that is, when Boniface the third obtained from Phocas the emperor the grant of the primacy ; about that very time, within sixteen years after, was the Alcoran framed. When the church was become so

despicable, when the christian religion was but a formality and shadow, then was the time to set up this despicable religion; and nothing more despicable could have been set up; yet at a strange rate it hath vied, so as to carry against the christian interest the cause so far, and unto so great a degree, and for so long a time.

And then, for the first setting up of that religion, a time was chosen by Satan on purpose. As the church history of those times doth acquaint us, there was nobody to make opposition to the mohammedan dotage and delirium. In the eastern church they were all busy in propagating such and such opinions, that they were contending about, on the one hand and the other, amongst themselves. And in the western churches they were all engaged generally, and so very busy in inventing new forms, and ceremonies, and rites, that there was nobody at leisure, not any of the doctors in the church to be found, (as the history tells us,) to make any opposition, or write any thing against the dotages of mohammedanism, that then first began to appear.

Afterwards, into how strange a darkness and stupidity did the christian church and interest and religion sink! so that for several ages together there was an utter vacancy and destitution, not only of divine, but of all common human knowledge. nothing but the grossest and most horrid barbarism, that spread itself through the christian church. And it was as bad, if we may not say worse, through the pride and tyranny of those that took upon them to be governors in the church; and the viciousness, immorality, and sensuality, and all other kinds of wickedness that abounded among the vulgar common sort. And so it continued till some later

stirrings and efforts towards reformation ; which, how partial they have been, that is, in how sma' a part, and incomplete where they have been, and what recedations there have been, where any thing hath been effected and done in that kind ; those who know any thing of former and foreign affairs cannot but understand.

And even now at this day, to cast our eyes round about us, whether we take nearer or more remote views, alas ! how little, how little is there to be discerned of the true spirit of christianity ! yea how much that speaks the very opposite thereunto, the spirit of the world ! a spirit of malignity, that is working, and striving, and contending every where, and lurking under the profession, the usurped and abused profession of the christian name ! so that, to speak as the truth of the matter is, a christian is become but just like another man ; and the christian church just like the rest of the world. Christianity hath put on the garb of paganism in worship in a part of it ; in manners and conversation in the most part, the far greater part.

5. It is to be observed and considered too, that we are still encountered with this twofold evil at once and in conjunction, wheresoever we cast our eye ; that is, the state of the church externally calamitous and miserable, and the retraction of the Spirit ; and the former of these still caused by the latter. This is very observable too, that these two things are in a connexion and conjunct.

6. It is to be considered farther, that we are much more apt to be sensible of the effect than of the cause ; whether we hear of such effects abroad, or whether we feel or fear them at home. If we hear of great devastations of countries, towns sacked,

battles fought, blood spilt, barbarous usages, and acts of violence done ; we are struck with a smarter and quicker sense upon the report of these things, than if we be made to understand how the religion of christians doth languish every where ; or when we hear of the prevailing of pride, and anger, and malice, and contention ; or of formality, deadness, indifferency, lukewarmness in the things of God. That is, the evils which are caused affect us a great deal more than those we are to reflect upon as the cause, and which are all comprehended in that one cause, the retraction of the Spirit, or that it is in so great a measure retired and withdrawn,

7. It is to be considered too (as pursuant unto that last note) that we are a great deal more apt to covet a state of external prosperity for the church, than the effusion and communication of the Spirit, and those things which would be the most direct issues and effects of that. Let us deal with our own hearts about this matter, and consider whether we be not more taken, and it do not far more highly please our imagination to represent to ourselves, or to have represented a state of external tranquillity and prosperity to the church, wherein we think to have a part or share, or may have, than to have a representation made of such a state of things, wherein the life and power of godliness, the mortification of sensual lusts, eminent self-denial, and the serious intending and designing for heaven, should be things visible and conspicuous in every one's eye. Let us consider whether the former of these do not take our hearts a great deal more than the latter, if it be not more pleasing and grateful to our thoughts. And again,

8. It is to be considered also that many are apt

to mistake, and to take wrong measures, of the christian church, and the christian interest, and the Spirit that breathes in and animates that church ; that is to reduce all these to the measure of this or that party, to which they have thought fit to addict themselves, and to judge it goes well or ill with the church, according as it goes well or ill with their own party, and to judge that there is more or less of the Spirit, as there is more or less zeal for promoting the interest of that party. And so the measures of the church and the christian interest are mistaken, but especially the Spirit of Christ most of all mistaken and misapprehended. The heats and fervours which some have for a private, little, narrow interest of their own, are taken for that great, large, universalising Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in all communications works with the greatest sweetness and benignity, and disposes the spirit of a man answerably herein to itself.

9. It is to be considered that we are more apt to confine and limit our eye and thoughts unto what is present, than to extend them to what is future, whether the present state of things be good or bad, pleasing to us or displeasing. For if the state of things be good, and such as pleases us, then we think a change will never come, our mountain is so strong as never to be removed ; and if it be bad, we are as apt to despond, that things must be always just as they are now, that it can never be better.

10. Those who do look forward unto what is future, if there be any representation set before them, any prospect of what is more pleasing and grateful to them, are more apt to be curious about the circumstances of such an expected state, than to be

serious in minding the substantials that do belong to that state itself; and that vain curiosity to inquire, joined with an overmuch boldness in some persons to determine about the times and seasons, when such and such things shall be, hath certainly been no small prejudice unto the interest of the christian religion in our days, upon a twofold account. The disappointment hath dashed the hopes of many of the better sort; and confirmed the atheism of those of the worst sort. Those of the better sort, many of them that have allowed themselves to be so curious and bold, curious in their inquiries, and bold in their definitions and determinations, when they have found themselves disappointed, have been apt to conclude concerning all the concerns of religion, as concerning those wherein they have found themselves disappointed, as thinking, that their imagination was as true as the gospel about these things; and so, if they have not undergone the shock of a temptation to adhere more easily and loosely unto the christian profession upon account of such disappointments, yet, at least, their spirits have been as it were sunk into despondency, because they relied upon false grounds, and which could not sustain a rational hope. And then the atheists and infidels have been highly confirmed in their scepticism and atheism, because such and such have been so confident of things, wherein they have been mistaken; and because they pretended to have their ground for their belief and expectation out of the scriptures, therefore those scriptures must surely signify nothing.

These things being considered, and we having the case so before us, as these things taken together do represent it; then,

II. That which is reasonable to be designed and expected in discourses of this nature, and concerning such a subject as we have here before us, should be comprised within such particulars as these.

1. To establish the belief of this thing in the substance of it, being a thing so very plain in the scripture, that there shall be a permanent state of tranquillity and prosperity unto the church of Christ on earth. So much, I doubt not, we have a sufficient ground for in the word of truth, and even in this very prophecy which this scripture hath relation to, as we may have occasion farther to show.

2. To settle the apprehension fully (that we should aim at on both sides, I in speaking, and you in hearing,) of the connexion between an external prosperity, and this internal flourishing of religion in the church, by the communication of the Holy Ghost in larger and fuller measures of it; the connexion of these with one another reciprocally, so as that there can never be an externally happy state unto the church without that communication of the Spirit; and that with it there cannot but be prosperity, if we speak of the freeing of it from intestine troubles, which will be the only things that it shall be liable to annoyance from in all likelihood, in a further course and tract of time.

Take the former part of this connexion, that is, that without such a communication of the Spirit an external state of tranquillity and prosperity to the church can never be, we should design the fixing of this apprehension well; for certainly they are but vain expectations, fond wishes, to look for such prosperity without reference unto that large and general communication of the Spirit. Experience hath done very much in several parts of the world,

if we had no prospect nearer us, to discover and refute the folly of any such hope, that any external good state of things can make the church happy. How apparent is it, that if there should be ever so much a favourable aspect of time, yet if men are left to their own spirits, and acted only by them, all the business will presently be for one person to endeavour to lurch * another, and to grasp and get power in their hands ! And then they will presently run into sensuality, or make it their business to serve carnal and secular interests, grasping at this world, mingling with the spirit of it. Thus it cannot but be, it must be, if an effusion of the Spirit be not conjunct in time with any such external smiles of time. There can be no good time unto the church of God, without the giving of another Spirit, his own Spirit ; that, or nothing, must make the church happy.

And that cannot but do it ; which is the other side of the connexion. For, let us but recount with ourselves, what it must needs be, when such a Spirit shall be poured forth, as by which all shall be disposed and inclined to love God, and to devote themselves to him, and to serve his interest, and to love one another as themselves, and each one to rejoice in another's welfare, so as that the good and advantage of one shall be the joy and delight of all. When men shall have no designs one upon another, no endeavours of tripping up one another's heels, nor of raising themselves upon one another's ruins ! This cannot but infer a good state of things, excepting what may be from external enemies. It is true, indeed, that when there was the largest communication of the Spirit that ever was in the church, yet it was molested by pagans ; but then it was not

* Defeat, pilfer

troublesome in itself, it did not contend part by part with itself. And if the communication of the Spirit, as we have reason to expect in the latter days, be very general, so as not only to improve and heighten the church in respect of internal liveliness and vigour, but also to increase it in extent, as no doubt it will, then less of trouble is to be feared from without. But we shall still be miserable, and it cannot be avoided but we must be so, if with the smiles of the times a large communication of the Spirit be not conjunct.

It is also to be designed in such a discourse,

3. To mind more what is substantial in that good state of things, whereof we speak, than the circumstances which belong thereto, and especially, than the time and season, when it may be hoped any such good state of things shall commence. And that we may be taken off from too much busying ourselves about that, I shall shut up all with two or three considerations, as,

(1.) That to have our minds and hearts more set upon the best state of things that it is possible the church should ever arrive to on earth, than upon the state of perfect felicity above, is a very great distemper, and which we ought to reckon intolerable by any means to indulge ourselves in. We know none of us can live in this world but a little while, and that there is a state of perfect rest, and tranquillity, and glory remaining for the people of God. We have, therefore, no pretence for being curious in our inquiries about what time such or such good things may fall out to the church of God in this world. It is a great piece of foolishness to cast in our own thoughts, Is it possible that I may live to see it? For aught we know, there may be

but a hand's breadth between us and glory, if we belong to God ; to-morrow may be the time of our translation. We ought to live in the continual expectation of dying, and of coming to a better state than the church can ever be in here. It argues a great infirmity, a distemper in our spirits, that we should reflect upon with severity, if we should be more curious to see a good state of things in this world, than to see the best that can ever be, and infinitely better than we can think, in heaven. And,

(2.) That as for that part of the good condition of the church, which consists in the communication of the Spirit ; so much of it as is necessary for us we may have at any time, if we be not wanting to ourselves, and are of those that belong to God, any of that seed which by this Spirit have been raised up to Christ. It must be our fault, if we have not so much of the Spirit as is requisite for our comfortable walking with God in this world. And, I add here-upon,

(3.) That that which is common to all times, yea and common both to time and eternity, certainly ought to be the greatest thing with us, and upon which our hearts should be most set. Let us but be intent upon this, to get a large measure of the Spirit into our own souls ; this may be had at any time, if we do not neglect ourselves and the rules that God hath set us ; and this is a thing common to time and eternity. " They that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," Gal. vi. 8. And therefore look we upon things according to the proper importance of them, and what they carry in themselves. Sure I am, that without much of the Spirit all the best things that this world can

afford me will never do me the least good ; I may be a great deal the worse for them, but never a whit the better. But if I have much of this Spirit, things can never go ill with me ; I shall be carried through whatever hardships shall fall to my share, and be within the compass of my lot, while I am in this world, and never regret the thought of them when once I arrive to the other shore, but forget all these troubles, like “ the waters that pass away,” as the expression is in Job xi. 16.

SERMON II.

PREACHED MAY 15, 1678.

SUCH things having been forelaid, we may adventure to enter upon the consideration of the former of the truths proposed, namely—

FIRST. THAT THERE IS A STATE OF TRANQUILLITY AND PROSPERITY APPOINTED FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD, FOR SOME CONSIDERABLE TRACT OF TIME HERE IN THIS WORLD.

And concerning that, there are two things that I shall labour to evince to you.

I. That it is a very happy and prosperous state, which these words do manifestly import and refer unto.

II. That that state is yet future ; or that what is here predicted concerning it is not yet fulfilled.

I. That it is a very happy state of things that is here referred unto, is plain from the very import of the words of the text ; “ Neither will I hide my face any more from them.” What can we conceive desirable, which these expressions may not be understood to signify ? But if we understand them to signify only a state of external prosperity, (and because any farther meaning, which the words in themselves might admit of, is fully carried under the other expression of his pouring out his Spirit ; and that is made causal of this, and nothing can be a cause to itself ; therefore we do understand them only of outward prosperity,) yet surely that must be a very happy and prosperous state, which such an expression is chosen to signify ; that God will shine upon them with most benign aspects of providence. What can go amiss with a people, upon whom he doth so ?

And if we consider the reference of these words unto what goes before, and the place which they have in that series of discourse, with which they stand connected, and wherein they make a part ; it will be very evident upon review, that they have reference to a very happy state of things foretold. If you consider the whole book of these prophecies, you will find, that any thing consolatory unto this people, directly and properly said to them, except what is occasionally here and there let fall, doth but begin with chap. xxxvi. The former chapters of this book are either full of reprehensions or comminations of the people ; the first twenty-four chapters are generally taken up so, or else in predictions of judgment and vengeance upon their enemies ;

(which doth collaterally and by the by import favour to them ;) the Edomites, and the Egyptians, and the Amorites, the Moabites, the Philistines, the Tyrians, and the Sidonians. Sundry of the following chapters after the first twenty-four are taken up so. But these four lying here all connected together, from chap. xxxvi. to xxxix. are wholly taken up in comfortable predictions unto this people, speaking of their happy state in themselves ; though also the destruction of such enemies, as did most stand in the way of that promised felicity, is here and there interserted. And then all the following chapters, from xl. to the end of the book, are a continued prophetical and emblematical description of the settled happy state, wherein they should be, after they were restored ; as in the description of the meaning and building of the city and temple you see at large.

And if we should go to point out particulars to you, you will find, that such as these do properly and fully lie up and down in these chapters that I have mentioned, and which seem to be all of a piece, and of the same unto one another. 1. Their reduction from their captivity ; that they shall all be brought back and gathered out of the several heathen nations of the world, where they were scattered and dispersed to and fro. 2. The reparation of all desolation, the great building of their wasted cities. 3. The great fruitfulness of their land. I will not direct you to the particular passages, where these things are mentioned ; but you may at your leisure view over these chapters, and you will find them all. 4. The great multiplication and numerousness of their inhabitants. 5. Their most entire victory and conquest over their most potent and

troublesome enemies. 6. Their entire union among themselves, under one king; as you may see in chap. xxxvii. The making of that scattered people entirely one, that so divided people, so broken from themselves, Israel and Judah, one stick in God's own hand. And, 7. God's owning them visibly as his people, and taking them anew into covenant with himself, having pardoned their iniquities, and cleansed them from all their filthiness and their idols, and so restored the relation between himself and them. Certainly the concurrence of all these things cannot but make a very happy state.

II. That such a state of things is yet future, requires to be somewhat more at large insisted on. And for the evincing of it, it is manifest that such predictions must have a signification in reference unto the people of Israel, according to one understanding or another of that term or name, "The house of Israel." And we can have but these two senses to reflect upon; either that it must mean Jacob's natural seed; or else the church of God in the world in common, his universal church, including and comprehending such of Israel, as have been or at any time shall be called, and brought within the compass of the christian church. Now take either of these senses of that style of address, and I suppose it capable of being plainly enough evinced, that such a happy state of things hath not been as yet, and therefore is to be looked upon as still future.

1. If you take Israel in the former sense, it is very plain that these prophecies have not been accomplished to the natural seed of Israel. Particularly,
(1.) That people have never been entirely restored to their own land. The prophecy concerning the

dry bones that should be made to live, in chapter xxxvii. is expressly said to concern the whole house of Israel, verse 11. But it is plain that the whole house of Israel, in the literal sense, hath not been restored. What became of the ten tribes we do not know. This is a thing about which there is much dissension; but none that I can tell are able to determine, where or in what part of the world they are. It is true indeed that we find the apostle speaking of the piety of the twelve tribes; "Our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come unto the promise of the resurrection," Acts xxvi. 7. But that can only be understood to mean, either that Shalmanezzer, when he carried away the ten tribes, left some; and yet it is plain that he left very few, insomuch that the new inhabitants wanted some to instruct them in the manner of the worship of the God of the land; or that some few might return of the several tribes, here and there one. But that they returned in a body, we have no reason at all to think; and so this prophecy hath not been fulfilled in reference to the main body of the ten tribes, concerning their restitution, and that resurrection that is imported by the enlivening into living men those dry bones.

(2.) That people have never been reunited into one people, the two tribes and the ten. But that is expressly predicted in the prophecy of the two sticks made one, Ephraim or Joseph, and Judah. The prophet is directed to take two sticks, chap. xxxvii. emblematically to signify that twofold people, of the ten tribes, and the two tribes, and these sticks are represented to him as made one. And the Lord tells him the signification of the prophecy is this, that he would make these two entirely one people.

It is plain, whatever there were of the ten tribes that did return from their captivity, they never came into a union with the two ; but they were so much divided from one another, even in the matter of religion, that we see by what is recorded in John iv. that a Samaritan woman made a scruple to give a little water unto one whom she took for a Jew, that is, our Saviour himself. And they were so much divided upon other accounts, consequently upon that division in reference to matters of religion, that, as one of the heathen poets says, they would not so much as show the way to one that was not of their religion.

(3.) There hath been no such signal destruction of their enemies, as is here foretold, in the chapter where the text lies, and the foregoing : those enemies that are spoken of under the name of Gog and Magog. I shall not trouble you with the variety of opinions concerning the proper signification of those names, and the people designed by them ; but whosoever can be understood by them, there hath been no such thing accomplished in reference to the house of Israel literally taken, as the prophecy of so great a destruction doth import. Some have thought the successors of Seleucus, expressly and chiefly Antiochus Epiphanes, to be meant ; against whom the people of Israel were successful in their wars at some times : but no such destruction, as comes any whit near the terms of this prophecy, can ever be understood to have befallen those enemies. There is not the least shadow nor footstep of such a way of destruction, as is mentioned in chap. xxxviii. That they should be destroyed miraculously, by hailstones, by fire and brimstone, ver. 22. That there should be such vast multitudes destroyed, as

that the very weapons should serve this people for fuel seven years together, chap. xxxix. 9, 10. Certainly take Israel in the literal sense, and understand the prediction in a proportionable sense, there hath been no such thing ever yet done and past.

(4.) There hath been no such city built, and no such temple raised, as will answer the descriptions in these prophecies ; as is most apparent, if you look from chapter xl. onward to the end. Especially, that there should be such waters issuing from the temple, rising from the sanctuary, and carried in a great river, till at last it comes, after so vast a course and tract of running, to fall into the Dead Sea, and to heal those waters. Take this in the literal sense, and no such thing hath ever been, or, for ought I know, is ever like to be ; it is very improbable it should. So little reason there is, either to think there hath been any literal accomplishment of these things, or that the literal sense is that whereunto we are to adhere.

(5.) It is expressly said, that they should all have David to be their king, chap. xxxvii. 24, 25. This cannot be meant literally. It was impossible he should be their king, who was dead so many hundred years before. Nor can we understand the prophecy to have been accomplished in reference to Israel literally taken ; for suppose you take David to mean Christ, as it must be taken, surely all Israel are not yet become christians, they are not yet united under Christ. And therefore it is more than evident, that according to the literal sense of Israel, though we should take the things prophesied not strictly in the literal sense, yet they cannot be understood to have had their accomplishment yet.

2. If we go the other way, and take Israel to

signify the christian church, and so not to exclude, but to comprehend Israel in the proper, natural, literal sense, being become christians, so many of them as have been so, or shall be so ; so these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled. That is, in reference to the universal church, it will appear, that it hath had no such happy state as these prophecies do amount unto ; neither in point of degree, nor in point of duration and permanency.

(1.) They have not had a happy state unto that degree, that is imported in these prophecies, and which even the text itself doth summarily import. There are especially these three things to concur. 1. The destruction of their external enemies. 2. A very peaceful, composed, united state of things among themselves. And, 3. A very lively, vigorous state of religion. Now a state composed and made up of the concurrence of these three, hath not befallen unto the church of God as yet. There hath been no such destruction of their external enemies, as can be understood to amount to the meaning of what is here predicted concerning that: no such victory obtained, as this destruction of Gog and Magog doth import: no such, as the success and issue of that famous battle of Armageddon, which some would have to be past ; though there is after that, a later destruction of Gog and Magog manifestly spoken of in the Revelation, chap. xx. But for such, as would have that famous battle to be already past ; that which they pitch upon as most probable, was the great battle between Constantine and Maxentius ; the victory of the former over the latter by less than 100,000 men, against the other opposing him with almost double that number. And it must be acknowledged, that that was a very

great victory, and of very great concernment unto the christian church : but no way at all correspondent, either unto what is foretold concerning the thing itself in these prophecies of Ezekiel ; or unto the consequent events upon what is said of the battle of Armageddon, in Rev. xvi. 16. There was no such continued peaceful state, that did ensue to the church after that victory. There was indeed a calm and serenity in Constantine's time, mixed with a great deal of internal trouble within the church itself, and which increased upon it more afterwards, and so still unto greater degrees for several centuries of years ; as we shall have occasion to take notice more upon another head. There was no such flourishing state of religion that did ensue answerable to the expression of the text, "I have poured out my Spirit upon them, saith the Lord God." And so there was not a happy state, made up by the conjunction and concurrence of the things which must concur. There was in Constantine's time, and after, much of tranquillity, by the cessation of persecution from without ; but there was less of the life and vigour and power of religion. That appeared a great deal more eminently in the suffering state and condition of the church ; and prosperity was too hard for religion, much more than adversity had been ; as all that know anything of the history of those times know. There hath been no such eminent destruction of the church's enemies ; no such internal tranquillity and peace within the church itself ; no such lively, vigorous, flourishing state of religion by the pouring forth of the Spirit ; there hath been no such concurrence of these, as to make up that measure and degree of happiness to the church, that is here plainly foretold

(2.) For the permanency and duration of such a happy state of things, it is apparent that they fall unspeakably short of making anything out to that purpose, who would have the things to be past which are here spoken of. It is a duration of a thousand years, that seems referred unto as the measure of that happy state which is here foretold ; if you compare these prophecies of Ezekiel with those that seem so very much akin to them in the book of the Revelation, especially chapter xx. Even those who would have these things to be past, do acknowledge these prophecies to refer unto one time and one state, unto one sort of enemies, and unto the church of God considered under one and the same notion, that is, the christian church. But the difficulty is very great to assign the beginning, and consequently the period, of such a thousand years.

For my own part, I will not assert any of these following things. Either, 1. That that thousand years doth precisely and punctually mean such a limited interval of time ; however more probable it may seem that it doth so, and though it be confessed to do so by them that would have these things to be past. Nor, 2. That Christ shall personally appear, as some are bold to assert, at the battle of Armageddon ; and that he shall personally reign afterwards upon the earth for a thousand years. Nor, 3. That there will be any resurrection, before that time do commence, of the bodies of departed saints. Nor, 4. That the happiness of that time shall consist in sensual enjoyments : which was the conceit of Cerinthus and his followers ; and which caused the millenaries to pass under the name of so odious a sect of old, by those who had taken notice of them, Epiphanius, and Austin after him,

and others : for they reckoned the felicity of those times should very much consist in a voluptuous life, that persons should have every thing to the full that should be grateful to their sense, all opportunity to indulge appetite, and the like. And least of all, 5. That in this state of things the saints, as such, shall have any power or right given them in the properties of other men ; or that there shall be a disturbing and overturning of ranks and orders in civil societies. I do not think that any of these things are confidently to be asserted ; and for the two last, they carry no other face than of things to be abhorred and detested.

But I conceive that thousand years to intend a very long and considerable interval or tract of time, wherein the state and condition of the church shall be peaceful, and serene, and happy ; but especially (as we shall have occasion more to show hereafter) by a large communication of the Holy Ghost, that shall make men have very little mind to this world, and very little seek such a thing as serving secular interests, and pleasing and gratifying their senses and sensual inclinations.

I also conceive that this state of things is not yet past. So much, I think, we may with some confidence assert : that is, there is not such a state of things, of such a constitution as that whereof you have heard, which hath been in any such permanency as that thousand years, though not strictly taken, yet must rationally be understood to signify. They that would have such a thousand years to be already past, are in very great difficulties about the commencement of it. Some would have it to begin with the beginning of Constantine's reign, and so to end proportionably from that day to a thousand

years strictly, for just so much time. And others would place the beginning of that time a considerable while after ; a hundred, or a hundred and forty, or a hundred and fifty years after ; that is, from the time of the taking and sacking of Rome by Alaricus and his Goths ; or by Gensericus and his Vandals ; until which destructions, the latter especially, Rome did continue pagan, though the empire was in christian hands ; and that therefore this thousand years, wherein Satan is said to be bound, began after that paganism was quite extirpated and banished from Rome. And yet those who go that way still more incline to the former account. If so, certainly such things must be acknowledged to have fallen within the compass of the thousand years, as the limits of them are set among themselves, as we would think very ill to agree with a state of things wherein Satan should be bound. According to the former account, that persecution by Julian must come within it : it is true, indeed, that was not of long continuance, nor very bloody ; but a little cloud (as Athanasius said of it) that would soon pass over ; yet it was a very manifest prejudice that he did to the christian interest, by those cunning arts he used in his time ; far more prejudice than had been done it by the bloody persecutions of former times ; as may sufficiently appear by a view of the state of things in those days, when it was not so much as permitted the children of christians to be taught any of the learned languages. They were particularly forbidden to be taught the Greek : upon which occasion I remember Gregory Nazianzen hath this expression, “ But I hope though we may not speak Greek, we may be allowed to speak truth ; and while we may be allowed to do so, as long as we have tongues

we will never forbear speaking." But it was a great check that was put upon the interest of christianity by that means ; and very unlikely to be so soon after the commencement of the thousand years. And besides that, all the dreadful persecution of the orthodox by the Arians immediately falls in : "Who persecuted the orthodox," as one speaks writing of those times, "a great deal more harshly, more severely, more horridly, than ever the pagans had done before them ; when even all the world was against Athanasius, and he alone was forced to sustain the brunt of the whole world." Very unlike to a time wherein the devil was bound ! And then falls in with the same time that strange and portentous growth of the mohammedan religion : and was that, too, while Satan was bound ? And in the christian church, the greatest tyranny among the church-governors, the greatest stupidity for several centuries of years among the priests and clergy, the greatest viciousness and debauchery among the generality of people, that we can possibly tell how to frame an imagination of. Besides that, within the same compass of time must fall out the bloody massacres of the poor Waldenses, about the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. Certainly, if all this while Satan was bound, we can never think of a time when he was loose. And therefore, in point of permanency, there hath been no such continuing happy state to the church, as yet past and over, which these predictions do most plainly refer unto. And therefore we have the thing first proposed, I conceive, in good measure cleared, that there is a state yet to come of very great tranquillity and prosperity to the church of God for some considerable tract of time.

I cannot now stay to apply this according to what it challenges; these two things I shall only for the present hint to you.

[1.] This being a matter revealed in the word of God, our faith ought to have an exercise upon it. We should believe that there is such a state of things yet to come, and have affections raised in our hearts proportionable unto such a revelation. It would be unreasonable to say, that we are to be affected with nothing but what is present, and comes under our notice by way of experience, our own experience: contrary to the temper which Abraham discovered, who rejoiced in the foresight of Christ's day, then so very far off. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad," John viii. 56. We should foresee such a state of things with gladness; our hearts should be comforted upon the apprehension of it. If we can have no enjoyment of future mercies that are designed unto the church of God, how should there have been any enjoyment of past mercies unto them that have lived long after? We find that to have been the temper of the people of God of old, that they have much enjoyed and lived upon ancient mercies, mercies long ago past; as you may see in such memorials as you have in Psalms cv. and cvi. and in other places of scripture. "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High," Psalm lxxvii. 10. What triumphs and exultations do you oftentimes meet with in the book of Psalms, upon account of the destruction of Pharaoh and his Egyptians, in the Red Sea, and the conduct of the people of Israel through the wilderness? Why, if memory will serve to fetch former mercies into our present enjoyment, certainly faith should serve to

fetch future mercies into our present enjoyment too, and give us the taste and relish of them.

[2.] We should take encouragement hence against the present horrid atheism and wickedness that doth so affront the interest of religion at this day. We are too much apt to pass our judgment upon things by very undue measures; to judge by the present sight of our own eye that that is well which we apprehend, or which carries a sensible appearance with it of being well for the present; but to forget that it is always somewhat future that must give a determination unto that which is simply best or otherwise; that a judgment is not to pass till we come to the end of things, till we see what will become of matters in their final issue. There will be a day of distinguishing, even in this world, in point of the external favours of Providence, between them that fear the Lord and them that fear him not. And though now the spirit of atheism be insolent, so as it never was in any age, no, not so much in any pagan nation; and that where the christian name is professed, even amongst ourselves, do we think therefore that atheists and their religion shall carry the cause? No; if we will but frame to ourselves the prospect which the word of God gives us an advantage and warrant to do, it would guide our judgments much another way; to think that that must need be the better side and the better part which shall be successful and prevailing at last. It is most eligible to be on that side which shall finally prosper, when God comes to lay claim to us, to challenge our help in bearing a witness to his name and truth and holy ways; "Come, who will take part with me against an ungodly race of men? Who will be religious in their irreligious age? Who

will fear God when it is counted matter of reproach, and an argument of a weak and crazy spirit, for men to fear and dread an invisible being?" It would help your resolution much, would you think in this case, that there will be a time when God shall be visibly owned in the world, and when it shall cease to be a reproachful thing to be a religious man, a fearer of the Lord.

SERMON III.

PREACHED MAY 22, 1678.

WE have spoken already of this proposition—That there is a state of very great prosperity and tranquillity, for a considerable tract of time, appointed for the church of God on earth. We have offered several things to assert the truth of it: and made some use of it, to recommend it as a fit object to be entertained by our faith; and that we would take encouragement from it against the prevailing atheism and wickedness of this apostate world, which hath borne so much sway in it through many ages, upon that prospect which this truth gives us, of a time and state of things, wherein it shall cease to be so, wherein religion shall lift up the head, and outface the wickedness of a corrupt and depraved race of men; when this very earth itself, that hath been the

stage of God's dishonour through so long a tract of time, shall be the stage of his glory.

But here some may be apt to say ; " To what purpose is all this, when no hope is given us of seeing any such good state of things in our days ? If we are not encouraged to expect with our own eyes to see such a happy state of things, had not we as good take all our comforts and encouragements from the expectation of a judgment-day to come, and an eternal state ? What doth it signify to have any representation made to us of a good state of things on earth, which we are told it is likely we shall fare never the better for ? "

This is a thing that requires to be distinctly discussed ; and therefore I shall spend some time upon it.

1. The exception would lie as much against the putting of any of these things into the bible, till at least immediately before the time when they should be accomplished and fulfilled. And so it is an insufferable reflection upon the divine wisdom, that hath thought fit that such an account of things should be given for so long time previous unto their accomplishment or actual taking place. And,

2. It is no prejudice at all, against our receiving encouragement and having our spirits fortified against the atheism of a wicked world by this prospect, that we may receive such encouragement also by the consideration of a judgment to come and an eternal state. For do not we know that sundry uses may be made of many doctrines, as one and the same truth may be proved by sundry mediums ? What prejudice doth it do an honest cause if one can produce twenty arguments to prove the same truth, and so all result into one conclusion ? We

reckon the truth is fortified and confirmed by it so much the more. And if there are sundry truths, if ever so great a variety of truths, that all meet, as it were, in one point, and produce the same good frame and temper in our hearts; is that a prejudice to us? I hope it is so much the more an advantage. But that which I shall mostly insist upon is,

3. That same question or inquiry, To what purpose is it that we should hear of such things when there is no hope given us to see them, or that they should be brought about in our time?—this question, I say, there is no serious, considering, well-tempered christian, but is best capable of answering it out of his own heart. He doth but need to consult with his own heart, when he is himself and in his right mind, and he will see enough even out of his own spirit from whence to answer the inquiry, and to say all that needs to be said in reference to it.

To make that out: it is obvious to our notice, that there are two extremes, (and therefore both of them bad enough, as all extremes naturally are,) from whence any such inquiry can be supposed to proceed. A man may say, To what purpose is it? either from stupidity and unconcernedness, as thinking they need not concern themselves about any thing that is not likely to fall within the compass of their own time: or from fretfulness, a vexatious, discontented temper of spirit, upon having a prospect of such things set before them, as they have no encouragement, it may be, to think they shall see. Now a sound and good temper and complexion of soul hath that in itself which would obviate and avoid both these extremes, and let us see sufficient reason for these two things in opposition to them, namely, 1. The entertainment of such a truth with

due complacency, notwithstanding we have no expectation to see the accomplishment of it in our time ; supposing we have no such expectation. And, 2. To admit the delay of that accomplishment with composedness and quietude of mind, so as not to be disturbed in our own spirits with that delay, though such things may not receive a speedy and sudden accomplishment according to our desire. The former of these would enable us to make a due use of such a truth as this ; and the latter would keep us from abusing it. By the former, we should be enabled to savour and relish it with complacency, and so as to get good out of it ; and by the latter, to avoid the getting of hurt, have our hearts fenced and fortified against any prejudicial impressions thereby. Wherefore these two things I shall labour to make out to you, that there are certain principles in every gracious and well-complexioned soul, that will,

I. Enable it to take complacency in such a truth as this, for the substance of it ; and that will,

II. Compose, so as not to admit of disturbance by the delay of its accomplishment ; even notwithstanding it be supposed that we are never to see it in this world ourselves, and with our own eyes. *

I. There are such principles as these, that have a tendency to make such a truth savoury to us ; notwithstanding it be supposed that we shall not see it fulfilled in this world ourselves.

1. A principle of self-denial. That will signify a great deal to this purpose. And you well know there is nothing more deeply radical in the whole frame of practical religion and godliness than that is. But certainly, if a man be of a self-denying spirit, he will be able to take complacency in somewhat else, than what doth respect his own personal con-

cernments. And is it not a most unsufferable thing if a man should not? What! would I fancy this great world made for me? and that all the mighty wheels of providence that roll and are kept in motion, from time to time, are all moved with reference to me? to give me a gratification and content according to the wish of my heart? What an insolent thing is so private and selfish a spirit as that!

2. A just concern for posterity would make such a truth savoury. And certainly there is no well-tempered soul destitute of that principle. Grace doth in this, as well as it doth in many other things, graft upon the stock of nature. You know it is natural with men, upon a consciousness of mortality and a desire of immortality, when they find they can live no longer in their persons, to desire to live in their posterity, those that shall come after them: and it is a great solace that they naturally take in the hope of doing so. Now when grace comes to graft upon this natural stock, would not the spirit of a man be disposed to take a great solace in the hope and expectation, that those who shall come after him shall live in a better state upon religious accounts than we have done in our days, or may be likely to do? If such a principle as this be not to obtain and take place and have an influence, what would you make of all the promises that were given to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob concerning their seed, so long before the accomplishment of many of them? What can all these promises signify, but upon the supposition of, and in a way of accommodation to, such a principle? You see how savoury and tasteful what God had told David concerning his house and posterity in aftertimes was to him: he

was not so stupid as not to be moved with anything of that kind ; but he is as a person in an ecstasy, a rapture upon it. “Thou hast spoken concerning thy servant’s house for a great while to come ; and is this the manner of man, O Lord God ? And what can David say more unto thee ?” 2 Sam vii. 19, 20. It was a great solace to good Jacob, old Israel, when he was now even next to death, to think of what should ensue in reference to his posterity and seed when he was gone. “I die,” saith he, “but God shall be with you,” Gen. xlviii. 21. And do not we think it were a good spirit in ourselves if we could be of the same mind ? Why, though we all die, God shall be with them that succeed ! If they shall come into that land, which our eyes shall not behold, what ! can we so put off man and christian both together as to take no complacency in the forethoughts of what good those who may come after may behold and enjoy, though we enjoy it not. It was a high pleasure that seems to be expressed in the contemplation of the future good of following generations, by the psalmist, in Psa. cii. 18. “A people, which shall be created, shall praise the Lord.” He was very well pleased to think of that, though it were then a time of very great affliction ; as you see the title of that psalm doth import ; whether the time present, or the time prophesied and foretold of : for the psalm is, “A prayer of the afflicted, when he pours out his soul to God,” as there you have it. While they are languishing in all that affliction and trouble, which they are supposed then to be under, yet they are pleased to think of a generation to come, a people yet to be born, yet to be created, that shall praise God and rejoice in his great goodness.

3. A loyal and dutiful love unto the blessed God himself, and concern for his interest, tends to make such a truth savoury, though we may perhaps never see the accomplishment of it in this world. Was that heart ever touched with a dutiful sense of his interest, that would not be pleased to think of his being glorified highly, upon the same stage where he has been so insolently affronted and provoked for so long a time? It was an inexpressible pleasure that seems to have gone with such expressions as these that we sometimes meet with: "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth;" as we find in Psalm cviii. 5. and in many expressions scattered up and down the scriptures, of like import. A truly pious soul would be mightily concerned that God should, at one time or other, have the just attribution and revenue of glory paid him, which is to arise out of this part of his creation, this lower, lapsed part. Considering now how mean and low and wretched a place soever this world is, yet it is a part of the creation of God, and there is a revenue of glory due to him out of it; who would not take complacency in the thoughts of a time, when it shall be gathered up and brought in, when the name of God shall be glorious on the earth, every knee bowing to him, and every tongue confessing to him; that at least it should more generally be so, than it hath hitherto been?

4. A compassionate regard to the souls of men hath still the same tendency to make us relish, with a great deal of pleasure, the forethoughts of such a state, wherein religion, that hath been so much under reproach for so long a tract of time, shall be a creditable thing, shall lift up the head with honour,

and outface insolent atheism and wickedness. If we consider this, as that wherein the souls of men are concerned, it cannot but be highly grateful to us to contemplate such better days to come. For by how manifest experience doth it appear that such a state of things, wherein religion is a reproach, endangers and ruins multitudes of souls every where ! How many are jeered and flouted out of their religion, where there have been only some lighter tinctures of it upon their spirits, or only some half inclinations towards it, while it is reckoned matter of reproach to be a fearer of the great God, when, to be a professed devotee unto the Sovereign Majesty of heaven and earth, to avow an awe and dread of invisible powers, is looked upon as an argument of a weak and effeminate mind ; and when it goes for pure fanaticism for any to pretend to stand in awe of an invisible Ruler ! It is manifest what multitudes of souls are ensnared unto perdition, even by the shame and reproach and fear of men, that religion hath been assaulted with in many ages, but never more than in our own. And is it not grateful and pleasant to forethink of such a time and state of things, after that the prince of the darkness of this world hath been by such variety of arts and methods imposing upon souls to their ruin ; to think, I say, of any time wherein he shall be bound, and the word of God at liberty and run and be glorified without any kind of let or restraint, wherein effectual endeavours shall everywhere be set afoot for the rescuing of souls from the common ruin ? Surely a just and generous love of mankind, refined and spiritualized as it ought to be in all our hearts, would, even upon that account and by its own natural tendency, make the forethoughts of

such a state of things very grateful, and very much commend such a truth to our acceptance and entertainment, notwithstanding the supposition that we see the accomplishment of no such thing in our time.

But we are to show farther, that,

II. There are principles also in every gracious person that tend to compose his spirit, so as that it shall not be disquieted by the delay of its accomplishment, and so will, by this means, prevent such a truth from being abused, or procure that there shall be no evil and hurtful impressions made upon our spirits by it; for of that there is real danger, that, having the prospect of such a state of things before our eyes, and yet no hope that we shall see the accomplishment of it in our own time, vexation, and discontent, and secret frettings should be provoked thereby. Therefore we will show also that there are principles contained in a right temper and constitution of soul, that will avoid that great extreme, as well as that of a stupid unconcernedness, and compose us unto a due comporting with the delay of the accomplishment of such things, whereof we have the prospect in such predictive scriptures. As,

1. A right and well-complexioned faith concerning these things hath a tendency to make us brook the delay of the accomplishment, without any hurtful resentments of it, so as to be discomposed in our spirits thereby. For it is the nature of such a faith to feed upon the substance of things, and not to exercise itself so much about the minuter matters and those that are of mere circumstance. That is rather belonging to the mean principle of sense, which can tell how to converse with nothing but what is present, and appears clothed with all the

circumstances of a present event. But faith is not so narrow or confined a principle. It can tell how to converse with objects that are in themselves valuable so as to unclothe them of present circumstances, and to consider them more abstractly as lying in themselves, and to enjoy the real gain that is in them, without limiting or determining them unto this or that time, or such or such other circumstances that do accompany them in their existence. Faith can tell how, while we are here upon earth, to fly to heaven for us, and to walk to and fro in the invisible regions, and to fetch us down comforts and consolations from thence. And if it can forage into all eternity, much more may it into a little future time, so as to fetch us what is relieving and comfortable from thence, according to what such futurity doth contain in it for that purpose. Upon this account we have that property of faith, that character of a believer, "He that believeth shall not make haste," Isa. xxviii. 16. He that is a serious believer indeed, of the right stamp and kind, will not prematurely catch at things. That faith is not apt to discompose the soul, and put it into a violent and impetuous hurry; but it is its natural effect to compose, to quiet and calm it, to keep it peaceable and sedate, till the events shall be duly seasoned and timed by Him who hath all times in his own hand and power. It is very observable, if you consider the substance of that prophecy, which these words of the prophet have a relation to, "I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." One would think, that upon its being understood what that corner-stone meant, the very hint and intimation of such a thing should put all

the powers of a soul, that hath the prospect of it, into a present hasty quick working; and that the matter should not admit of a moment's delay, but be presently done; so great a thing as the laying of that corner-stone! but this is said several hundred years beforehand; and yet "he that believeth shall not make haste:" he shall enjoy it now by faith, taste the consolation of it, and have his spirit composed unto a willing and peaceful deference, or referring of the matter how this business should be timed, or when it should be brought about, unto him who is the great Lord, and Author, and Orderer of all things. As apt a thing as Christ's coming in the flesh was to raise desire, and heighten and stir up mighty affection among them that looked for the consolation of Israel; yet, "he that believeth shall not make haste."

2. A truly christian patience. It is the proper business of this to compose a man's soul. "In your patience possess ye your own souls," Luke xxi. 19. The work of patience is to make a man master of his own soul; that it shall be in his power, and he shall enjoy himself: for an impatient man is outed, dispossessed of himself, he hath no command of himself. Now patience hath its exercise for keeping us in the possession of ourselves, not only in bearing the afflictions that lie upon us, but in expecting the good things that lie before us, and which we have in prospect and view. "Hope that is seen, is not hope: but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," Rom. viii. 24, 25. "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry," Heb. x. 36, 37.

You have need of patience, that you may brook and comport with the delay of his coming, and not count it long. So the apostle James, chap. v. 7, 8. is pressing to patience in reference to the relief that was to be expected at the coming of our Lord; and he tells those to whom he writes, "The husbandman hath long patience, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." It is still drawing nearer and nearer. What coming that is, we shall not now dispute; or how near or how far off: but he gives them to understand, that while he was not as yet come, they had need of patience to compose their hearts, and to keep them composed and quiet during the time of their expectation.

3. Weariness of sin will do much to this purpose. If once the body of death be really burdensome to us, and we would fain by any means in the world have the power of sin abated; this will tend to compose us unto a willingness, that God should take any course with us, that according to his estimate and account may most aptly serve that end, to break the power of sin. Well, suppose he thinks this a fitter course for us, instead of letting the sun shine upon us, to make the fire burn round about us; suppose he judges it fitter for us to be under strikings and hammerings in order to the working off our dross, and beating us into a better form and figure; then a true and real weariness and impatency of sin would make us contented to be brought to this temper through any course, so it do but weaken and wear sin, and break the power of it more and more. It would make us contented to endure harsher methods for our time, so it will serve that happy

end, and beget in us better frames of spirit. For he that is a far more competent judge than we are, (we have reason to conclude by the event,) doth judge, that such rougher means and courses are more suitable to our state, to help us to that better pitch and temper of spirit, than a prosperous state of things externally would be; such as is meant here by God's "not hiding his face." It may be he doth foresee, that we should not know how to comport with such a state of things, that we should grow vain and foolish, earthly and forgetful of him, and never mind the great concerns of religion, when once trouble and calamity left us. If once we be brought heartily to hate sin, and to reckon that the greatest of all imaginable evils; we should be very well contented, that God should use us with whatsoever severity, so that the power of sin may be abated, and a better temper of spirit promoted.

4. A sense of the demerit of sin, would certainly persuade to much composure of mind in such an expectation. He that considers with himself, "I am less than the least of all mercies," and I have deserved not only to be under the continual harassings of severe providence all my days in this world, but I have deserved hell; may keep his spirit quiet by that means, though he doth not see a prosperous state of things in this world; especially if he have the apprehension withal of pardoning mercy, and the sweet savour and relish of that. He that would be contented to have undergone any the greatest agonies and distresses whatsoever, so he might but have had the light of God's countenance shining upon him, so he might but see that those agonies and distresses of spirit did open a way unto a more halcyon season for his spirit,

certainly he would well be content to undergo any severities of dispensations in outward respects, and think all well if God have pardoned his sin, and let fall all controversy with him. And that belongs to a good temper of spirit too, to apprehend sin either actually pardoned, or at least pardonable; that God is reconcilable, if he comply with his terms. And if I can once savour and relish such a thing as that, I may very well forbear indenting* and capitulating with him for such a state of things in this world, that would be pleasing and grateful to me.

5. A subject, governable spirit would contribute very much to keep us composed and quiet under such an expectation and delay: a spirit instructed unto obedience, and that knows how to be under government, and to yield a consent that God should rule. If we can but allow him to bear rule in all the kingdoms of the world, and do what he pleases on earth in his own way and time; if we have our hearts formed unto this, it will certainly make us composed in the expectation of whatever were most grateful to us in this world, or during the delay of bringing such things about for us. We find our Saviour doth with some severity reflect upon his disciples, immediately before his ascension, when they put that curious question to him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" It was an odd notion, too, that they had of that kingdom, as appears from other passages. Why says he, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power," Acts i. 6, 7. What! are you for wresting the sceptre out of his hands, and will not you allow

* Contracting, making a compact.

him the government of the world? Are you not contented he should bear rule? Certainly it is a very ill-tempered spirit, that will quarrel at this, that God is above us, that he hath the ordering and timing of all things in his own hand and power. Therefore a subject, governable spirit must needs be in this case a calm, composed, quiet spirit, unapt to storm and tumultuate, and to admit of any vexatious and unquiet thought, because such things are not done now, or possibly may not be done within our time, that we could wish to see done. You find that it was indeed a very fervent desire that Moses had of seeing the land of Canaan. It is worth while to take notice how he pleads with God upon that account, as he recollects the story himself, Deut. iii. 24, &c. He is relating to the people how he besought the Lord at that time, when the controversy was about that business. "I besought the Lord," says he, "at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand, for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon." But how is he answered? "But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee, speak no more to me of this matter;" I will not be spoken to any more about the matter. And you see afterwards how contentedly he goes up and dies on this side Jordan. "Go up and die;" and he goes up and dies; there was no more disputing about the business, he was contented to die, and not see that goodly mountain and Lebanon. Certainly that is a very good

contentment in such cases, for the Lord to order what he sees meet unto our lot and portion.

6. A serious diligence in present duty. Whoever have not a disposition of heart to mind the duty of their own time, the business that lies in their hand to do ; certainly their temper is not good. But every serious christian can find himself so much to do, as to have little leisure to entertain himself unto his prejudice with disquieting thoughts concerning what is yet future, whether of good or evil, within the compass of time and of this present lower world. And if it be observed, I doubt not but common experience will give suffrage to it, that they are most apt to let out their spirits extravagantly to mind the concernments of future time unto anxiety and so as to busy themselves most about them, who have the least mind to be busy about present duties. You know the looser and more careless and licentious christians, who cannot endure to have their spirits bound and tied down to their work, the work of their present stations, are they that love to be making complaints. Oh ! how I could serve God, if I were but in such a time ! So liberal are they to him of that which is not in their own power, which is not theirs. It is only the present time is theirs : but they will not serve him with that which they have, the present day. He that understands his work and business as a christian, that is, to give up himself to prayer, and to a serious watching over his own heart, to the endeavour of preserving a good temper of spirit, or preventing a bad ; he that knows what it is to be intent upon the mortifying of corruption, and the quickening and exercising of one and another grace seasonably, and as occasions do invite and call it forth into exercise ; such a one we

may truly reckon to be very well composed in his own spirit, in reference to what God does or is doing in his time.

7. Familiarity with death is another thing in the temper of a good soul, that will very much compose to a quiet, peaceful frame, during the delay of such things as we wish to see in this world, in reference to the prosperous state of the church of God and the interest of religion. Certainly a man is to be reckoned so much the better christian, by how much the more he is acquainted with the thoughts of dying, and hath made death familiar to himself. Now he that lives conversant about the very brink of the grave, that reckons upon living but a little while here, but is continually expecting his dismissal and call into eternity; cannot surely be concerned to any great anxiety of mind, about what shall or shall not come in this world within his time. For such a one would reckon with himself; Suppose I had ever so great assurance, that such and such desirable things shall fall out next year, yet I may die this. No serious person will put death far from him, look upon it as a very distant thing; and therefore such will not be very apt to disquiet themselves with the solicitous expectation of good things on this side, because they will still reckon, Death may come between me and that expectation, if it were ever so near.

8. A heavenly frame of spirit will do more than all in this matter. To have the heart much taken up with the thoughts of heaven, and the rest which remains for the people of God, will deliver one from the danger of hurtful impressions by having the prospect of such good things before us in this world, which it may be we shall not live to see. You read

of those worthies in Heb. 11. several of whom had been named in the verses before this which I am about to mention, verse 13. It is said of them, "They all died in faith, not having received the promises; but they saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." And doing so, "they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country," verse 14. that it is the affairs of some other country which their hearts and minds are more upon, and therefore that they are not so greatly concerned about the good and evil that they may enjoy or suffer in this country. No, they are seeking a country, knowing that their great concerns did not lie much here. And therefore they confidently died in faith, not having received the promise of such and such things that they had the prospect of; merely through the impression and power that a heavenly spirit had with them, to carry them to follow and mind heaven and the great concernments of the eternal world, that everlasting state of things. And, as was hinted before, it is certainly a most intolerable distemper of spirit, and wherein we are by no means to suffer or indulge ourselves, that there should be a disposition in us to be more pleased and take more complacency in the forethoughts of the best state of things imaginable in this world, than in the forethoughts of heaven, that every way perfect state, unexceptionably perfect. He that can be contented to sin on still, that he may have his imagination gratified here in this world, is certainly under a great distemper, to speak the most gently of it. And how unreasonably preposterous is it, that any should prefer that which is but intermediate, before that which is most

ultimately final! Still always that which is best is at last; that state of things is the only unexceptionable state, which is unalterable; that state, which is never to give place to another, is the only state that is entirely and completely good; it is fit, that that only should be so. There is no pretence for a desire of change, in reference to a state perfectly good; and whatsoever state is not perfectly good, it is still always reasonable to expect and desire a better.

Now all these things, I doubt not, you must confess at the very first view do belong to a well-tempered spirit: and if so, it must argue a very ill frame, if there should be any such sickly hankerings after the best things that we can imagine in this world, as that we cannot satisfy ourselves, while we have no hope, or no great reason to hope, that we shall see them to fall out within the compass of our time.

SERMON IV.

PREACHED MAY 29, 1678.

I SHALL add one or two more principles of a christian spirit to those already mentioned, which cannot but keep our spirits composed in the prospect of a better state of things on earth, though we have little prospect that we shall live to see it.

9. A sincere devotedness to God and to his

interest. This will compose, and upon the matter make us indifferent, in what time or state of things we live, so it may serve his interest. We have that notion most clear in our minds, that we were not made for ourselves, nor sent into this world upon our own errand; and it can never be well with us, till the temper of our spirits doth correspond and answer to the true light that shines in us, to our light in this particular thing; so as that we hereupon become sincerely devoted and given up to God, as knowing, that this is our errand in this world, to be to him, and to be used by him for his own purposes and services as he pleases. We well know, it is very reasonable and fit he should have some or other that should own him even in the worst of times, and why not we? What reason can we assign, why we should be the exempted persons? Why we, rather than others, should not serve him in difficulties and exercises, and endure hard things for him, if he will have it so? Unto a frame and state of sincere devotedness to God, such a thought will be very familiar, "I am not my own;" and how strange a power would such a thought, seasonably admitted and well placed, have upon our souls, to have them contempered to this apprehension, "I am none of my own?" Sincere devotedness to God is, 1. Absolute and entire, so as to leave us no right in ourselves apart from him. 2. Upon conviction, that it is the highest excellency created nature is capable of, to be in pure subserviency to him. 3. Upon a thorough apprehension, that he is the most competent judge how every one of us may serve him to the best purpose, and to the most advantage to his interest. And thereupon, 4. It cannot but be accompanied with the highest com-

placency and pleasure that we are serving him though we are wasting ourselves in serving him. It cannot but be a matter of high complacency, to be sacrifices consuming in the very flames, on purpose for his glory and pleasure. While we apprehend he is pleased, it is most agreeable to such a temper of spirit to be ourselves highly pleased too. For what ! should his pleasure and ours be diverse ? And must there be two wills and interests between him and us ?

10. A religious, prudent fear of misapplying prophecies, or astricting and determining them to this or that point of time, which may not be intended by the Spirit of God. It is certain there ought to be a religious fear of this, because they are sacred things, and therefore not to be trifled with, or made use of to other purposes than they were meant for ; much less to serve mean purposes, to gratify our own curiosity, to please our fancy and imagination. And there ought to be a prudent fear of this, and will be in a well-tempered soul, because of the great hurt and danger that may attend such misapplications.

There are two extremes that persons are apt to run into in this matter ; either to set such foretold events too far off, or to make them too near. And we are prone to run into one or the other of them, according as the cases vary and are opposite. For suppose it to be either a bad state of things that is foretold, or suppose it a time for doing some duty unto which we are disinclined, then we make the time very remote, put far off the evil day, think the time is not come yet of building the house of God, of being intent upon the duty that is incumbent upon us. But if they be halcyon days, and it

be a grateful prospect of things that we have before us; then we are as apt to set it too near, and to catch at these good things prematurely, before they be ripe and ready for us, or we for them. And here lies our danger.

I cannot but recommend to you that remarkable scripture in 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit (or by pretended inspirations) nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." You shall hardly meet with a more solemn, earnest obtestation* in all the bible than this is: that is the thing I reckon it so very remarkable for. "I beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" by what he knew was most dear to them, and the mention whereof would be most taking to their hearts; if you have any kindness for the thoughts of that day, any love for the appearance and coming of our Lord; if ever any such thoughts have been grateful to your hearts, we beseech you by that coming of his, and by your gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, that ye do not suffer yourselves to be discomposed by an apprehension, as if the day of Christ were at hand. It may perhaps be thought very strange why the apostle should lay so mighty a stress upon this matter, to obtest in it so very earnestly: and really I could not but think it exceeding strange, if I could be of the mind that the coming of Christ here spoken of were only the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that "the man of sin" afterward spoken of

* Supplication, entreaty.

were only meant of Simon Magus and his impostures, the feats that he was at that time supposed and believed to do ; which certainly could be things of no such extraordinary concernment unto them that lived so far off as Thessalonica at that time, and much less to the whole christian church. But if we consider the thing itself, according to the ordinary notion that is wont to obtain concerning this day of our Lord, and the gathering together of all his saints unto him, certainly it was a matter of most extraordinary importance that it should not be apprehended as at hand. For do but think what dismal consequences would have ensued, if it should have been so apprehended, as if that blessed state of things were presently to take place, were even at the door. We know what a dreadful apostacy hath come since, hath intervened, and of how long continuance : if this had obtained as a part of the religion of christians, that the day of the Lord was then at hand, why, then,

(1.) How strangely had the christians of that time been diverted from the proper work and business of their present day ! all held at a gaze, and in an amused expectation of the present coming of our Lord !

(2.) What a strange surprise had the afflictions been to them that did ensue ! When they were in a present expectation of nothing but the glorious appearance of their Lord, to have had things come upon them that were of so directly contrary a nature and import ! Instead of that, to be presently thrown into a sea of trouble, or into the flames of suffering, how strange a surprise had it been !

(3.) What a despondency of spirit had followed upon their disappointment ! How had the christian hopes every where languished, and their hearts even

failed them and died within them ! As it was with them not being yet instructed in the constitution and design of Christ's kingdom, whose very hopes did expire when he expired. "We trusted that it was he that should have redeemed Israel."

(4.) How had it caused the infidel world to triumph over christianity ! How had it opened their mouths wide ! "This was a part of the religion of christians, that their Christ was to come again in that very age ; and now, even from their own principles, their religion is proved a cheat, a mere imposture !"

There is certainly very great danger, and there ought therefore to be a religious and a prudent fear, lest we should misapply prophecies, and determine them unto unintended points of time. It is very agreeable unto a good temper of spirit so to do. And if we do so, that very awe will keep us composed and within the bounds of modesty and good temper.

I therefore shut up what I have to say on the first proposition offered from the text with this caution ; that we take heed, lest we fail of giving a due preference unto the Spirit of holiness, or the Spirit of God, as he is the Spirit of holiness, above what we give to the spirit of prophecy, as such. In so plain a case I need not industriously represent to you the inequality of the comparison ; and how much the Spirit of holiness, as such, is to be preferred before the spirit of prophecy, as such. That is peculiar unto the children of the Most High, the sons of God, those who are designed for an eternal inheritance : the other, strangers, even a paganish Balaam, may share and partake in as well as others. And what good would it do us if we had the

foreknowledge of all events through all succeeding time? Most apparent it is that infinite knowledge doth only agree with infinite power; and, therefore, that it is fit that knowledge should be proportionably bounded as power is, kept within as narrow limits. It would not only do us no good, but it would be a most unspeakable prejudice to us to have the foreknowledge of all events; that that should be the measure and compass of our understanding faculty, to have the knowledge of things future as well as of those which are present. For plain it is, that the good things which we should foreknow, if we see them certain not to fall out in our own time, and especially if we did foreknow that they would nearly border upon our time, how should we languish in the very sight of them, that we should come so near and not reach? And for all the evils that we should foresee, we should thereby multiply them, and suffer every affliction a thousand times over, whereas God intends we should suffer it but once. We should bring the trouble of all our days into every day. It was therefore certainly a merciful law, if we would understand it; "Take no thought for tomorrow; sufficient for the day is the evil of it." And I reckon it admirable wisdom, which we are all concerned to adore, that when it was as easy to God to have given us a catalogue of all considerable events unto the end of the world, determined unto certain times when they should fall out, as to give us the ten commandments, he hath done this, and not that. It was admirable wisdom, which we ought highly to reverence him for, that he hath stated our case so, and doth keep times and seasons so hid in his own hand and power, as he is pleased to do. And for whatsoever satisfaction we are

capable of taking, in apprehending the substantial truth of such a thing without bringing it to circumstances, that there is such a good state of things for the church of God in this world, and at one time or other will obtain; whatever just satisfaction we can take in the apprehension of it; I reckon that if we had that due respect that we should have unto a right temperature of our own minds and hearts, in such particulars as I have mentioned, we should thereby highly enhance that pleasure; as much as the pleasure that a temperate man takes in eating and drinking is greater than that which a furious and libidinous appetite is capable of taking, in a person to whom his very hunger is a disease.

And therefore now I shall leave this proposition, and go on to that other truth that we observed,

THAT SUCH A GOOD STATE OF THINGS CAN NEVER BE BROUGHT ABOUT BUT BY A GREAT EFFUSION OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

In speaking to this, I shall,

I. Briefly show what kind of communication of the Spirit this must be.

II. Show the apt and appropriate usefulness of that means unto this end, the bringing about of a good state of things.

I. What kind of communication it must be.

If we speak of it objectively, that is, in respect of the thing communicated, so the communication of the Spirit must intend the influences and operations of the Spirit, and the consequent effects and fruits of it; its CHARISMATA; those principally and chiefly that do accompany salvation, which proceed from it as the Spirit of holiness. Though yet we are not to

exclude those ordinary gifts of the Spirit that are statedly in the church, and subservient to those other. Whether ever any extraordinary gifts shall be renewed, that, because I know nothing of it, I shall affirm nothing in.

If you speak of this communication formally, as to the nature or kind of it in itself considered, so we may understand it to be a very great and plentiful communication that is here meant. So the very expression in the text of “pouring forth” doth import; the same word being used sometimes to signify the larger and more remarkable issues of God’s wrath, when as a deluge and inundation it breaks forth upon a people and overflows. It signifies, as some critical writers do observe, both celerity and abundance in the effusion. And the expression having that use, to denote the breakings forth of the wrath and fury of God, and being now applied here to this purpose, it carries such an import with it, as if it had been said, “My wrath was never poured forth so copiously, so abundantly, but that there shall be as large and copious an effusion of my Spirit.” I take it, that these two properties must be understood to belong unto this communication; the fulness of it, in reference to each particular soul, or intensively considered; and the universality of it, so as that it shall extend unto vastly many, in comparison of what it hath done; but neither of them to be understood in an absolute sense. And so much being supposed (as there will be occasion in future inferences from scripture to let you see) that the communication will be of this kind, and qualified by such properties, we have a sufficient ground upon which to go on unto the next head, that is, to show,

II. The apt and appropriate usefulness of this effusion of the Spirit unto this purpose, to bring about a good state of things for the christian church. And in doing that, we shall have two things to evince.

1. The efficacy of such an effusion of the Spirit unto this purpose.

2. The necessity of it.

That this means will certainly do the business, and that nothing else can; that there is no other way to bring such a state of things about. Which things need to be insisted on particularly and severally, to obviate two great evils, to which we are very liable; that is, 1. To distrust such a spiritual means of our good, and of the common good, as this is. 2. To let our minds and hearts hanker after some other means and methods, that certainly will never do the business.

(1.) There is a very great aptness to distrust such a means as this, to entertain very cold thoughts about it. The Spirit! How should the Spirit do such a thing as this; bring about a universal tranquillity and peace, and in all respects a more prosperous and flourishing state for the church of God in the world? That same expression of the prophet, and the form of it, being considered, that it is expostulatory? "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Mic. ii. 7. (So the house of Jacob is expostulated with!) it imports a very great aptitude even in a professing people, to have a great deal of distrust about the Spirit, and the effects to be accomplished and brought about by it. It is a keen and pungent way of speaking to speak expostulatorily, as here. "What! have you learned no better, you house of Jacob, than to think, that the Spirit of the Lord can

be straitened? that there can be any limits and bounds set unto its power and influence?"

(2.) There is as great an aptness to trust in other means, and let out our hearts to them. An arm of flesh signifies a great deal, when the power of an almighty Spirit is reckoned as nothing. And persons are apt to be very contriving, and prone to forecast, how such and such external forms would do our business, and make the church and the christian interest hugely prosperous. As great an extravagancy as if we would suppose that fine sights would fill a hungry stomach, or that gay clothes would cure an ulcerous body; (as I remember that is Plutarch's similitude;) or a diadem cure an aching head, or a fine shoe a gouty foot. It is a very vain thing to think that anything that is merely external can reach this end, or do this business. For it cannot be done by any other way, by any might or power, but by the Spirit of the living God.

And therefore we shall speak distinctly to these two things, the efficacy, and necessity, of such an effusion of the Spirit unto this purpose.

1. The efficacy of it, to bring about a very happy state of things to the christian church. Do but a little recollect yourselves what hath been said concerning such a state of things as we might call happy and prosperous. All is capable of being reduced to these two things, 1. The more vigorous and lively verdure of religion, that that itself do live and prosper more. And then, 2. That there go therewith external tranquillity and peace. Now it may easily be apprehended how an effusion of the Spirit doth directly do the former; and we shall afterwards come to show how by that it doth the latter too

There is nothing that is so genuine and natural a product of the effusion of the Spirit as the life of religion in the world. And it may be shown how the Spirit may have an influence to this purpose, both mediately and immediately.

(1.) Mediatly : it may have an influence to the promoting of the life, and vigour, and power of religion, by the intervention of some other things : as,

[1.] By means of the kings and potentates of the earth. We have had experience how, in all times and ages, our own nation hath felt the different influences of the princes under which we have been. But we are not now to be confined within such narrow bounds ; for we are speaking of the state of the church of God in the general. And think how it will be if such scriptures ever come to have a fuller accomplishment than they have yet had ; when in all the parts of the christian world kings shall be nursing fathers, queens nursing mothers, when the church shall suck the breasts of kings, when the glory of the Gentiles shall, by them, be brought into it ! How much will it make for the prosperity of religion every where in the world when these shall become, in all places, the proper characters of princes, (as they are the characters of what should be,) that they scatter the wicked with their eyes, that they are just, ruling in the fear of the Lord, and are upon the people, as showers upon the mown grass, and as clear shinings after rain ; are men of courage, men fearing God and hating covetousness ! Think whether this will not do much to the making of a happy state as to the interest of religion in the world, when they shall universally concur, or very generally, in the practical acknowledgment, that Christ is King of kings, and Lord of lords, willingly

resign, as it were, their sceptres, or hold them only in a direct and designed subordination and subserviency to him and his sceptre.

[2.] By and through them, upon whom the work of the gospel is incumbent in the church, the ministers of it. In such a time, when the Spirit shall be poured forth plentifully, sure they shall have their proportionable share. And when such a time as that shall once come, I believe you will hear much other kind of sermons, or they will who shall live to such a time, than you are wont to do now-a-days. Souls will surely be dealt withal at another kind of rate. It is plain, too sadly plain, there is a great retraction of the Spirit of God even from us. We know not how to speak living sense unto souls, how to get within you: our words die in our mouths, or drop and die between you and us. We even faint, when we speak; long experienced unsuccessfulness makes us despond. We speak not as persons that hope to prevail, that expect to make you serious, heavenly, mindful of God, and to walk more like christians. The methods of alluring and convincing souls, even that some of us have known, are lost from amongst us in a great part. There have been other ways taken, than we can tell how now to fall upon, for the mollifying of the obdurate, and the awakening of the secure, and the convincing and the persuading of the obstinate, and the winning of the disaffected. Sure there will be a larger share, that will come even to the part of ministers, when such an effusion of the Spirit shall be as is here signified: that they shall know how to speak to better purpose, with more compassion and sense, with more seriousness, with more authority and allurements, than we now find we can.

Other ways also we may suppose the Spirit to have mediate influence by others for this purpose. I shall only close this discourse with saying somewhat to an objection that some may be apt to make.

But to what great purpose is it, may some say, to speak of what the Spirit will do, when it shall be so largely and plentifully poured forth? This we do not doubt, but when the Spirit comes it will do very great matters; (as the Jews' expectation was, "When Elias cometh he will restore all things;") but what shall we do in the mean time; and what good will the foreknowledge of this do us now?

Certainly it will import us not a little even now, to know which way we are to look, what it is that will do our business and must do it; to be at least delivered from that impertinent trouble of making vain attempts, and of expecting that to be done any other way, which can never be. Our experience shows us, alas! it is not this nor that external frame of things, that can mend our case. Should we not be as bad as any other men can be to us, if there be not another spirit? Hath not experience shown it? and to have a disposition to be continually making attempts, wherein we are sure to be disappointed, and can bring about nothing, so that we shall but traffic for the wind; it is but to add mockery to the torment of our disease. It is indeed a part of the disease itself, to have a kind of pruriency and eager desire to trying things, that would make our case so much the worse. A prosperous state of things externally, some are ready to imagine, would itself do all. Alas! what an impertinency were that, and how little to the purpose! In all likelihood it would make us ten thousand times worse than the sharpest sufferings could ever

make us, or let us be, according to God's ordinary methods. And to know that we are to look one way is certainly a great advantage; that we may hence at least learn not to look a *contrary* way; that when we hear it is the effusion of this Spirit must do our business, we should not let our spirits run into union with another kind of spirit: as it is with all such that, when a state of things displeases them, are ready to cry out, "Let fire come down from heaven," and make a present destruction of all. "You know not what spirit you are of," saith our Lord in this case. Is this like the gentle workings of that benign and sweet Spirit that we are told must do our business? and it would be a great advantage to us, if the apprehension of this did so constantly and habitually possess our souls, and sink into our hearts, as to frame all our deportments accordingly; and that this might be understood to be our only avowed expectation and hope, it would deliver the rest of men from fear about us; for certainly no man hath any reason to be afraid of the Spirit of God, that never did any one any hurt: It can surely never do men any hurt to be made better by its operations in so easy a way, and to be brought into so easy a state as that will be sure to issue in. Hereupon we shall deliver ourselves and the world about us from a great deal of inconvenience, if once this be but understood, and avowed, and seconded by all suitable deportments, that we only expect the Spirit of the blessed God to change the state of things in the world, and to make it better and more favourable unto the religion of serious christians.

SERMON V.

PREACHED JUNE 5, 1678.

WE have been treating of the mediate influence of the Spirit in order to the more prosperous and flourishing state of religion in the world : and have shown what influence it may have unto this purpose, by the magistracy, and by the ministry, being exercised immediately upon them, and so working mediately by them for the promoting of religion amongst others, by those who stand invested with the glory of these great offices.

We shall go on to show what influence it may have,

[3.] By means of family order. And it is too obvious unto common observation, how religion hath decayed, and the interest of it declined by the disuse and deficiency of this means ; since families have become so much the nurseries of vice and wickedness, that were much more generally the seedplots of religion.

I doubt not but many of you can remember the time, when in this city family discipline was much another thing than now it is ; and the sobriety and diligence and regularity of youth much more than now ; and fewer known to miscarry than at this time. And it is too plain a case, that the miscarriage of so many doth owe itself much to this, the

neglect and letting down of family government, and the banishing of religion out of families, at least in a very great degree. That there is so little calling upon the name of God, so little of family worship, family instruction, family discipline; that there are so few governors of families, of whom it may be said, as concerning Abraham, "I know Abraham;"—what will he do? "He will command his household," Gen xviii. 19. How few will the state of the case admit that character to be given of in our days! How little care is taken to ground them that are under the charge and inspection of masters of families in the principles of religion! Do we observe from sabbath to sabbath, that they profit by ordinances? whether they are going forward or backward in the business of religion? And where the fathers of families have, or pretend to have less time, how much might be done by the mothers among the younger children, and the servants of their own sex! And whereas by the superior heads of families want of time is very much pretended, pray, whose is your time, do you reckon? And whose business is it, that you have to do in the world, God's or your own? And if you will say, that the duties of your calling are part of the business that God will have you do; it is but too possible to do God's business as our own; and therefore it is to be considered, whether you do that business as God's or as your own. And suppose it ever so much God's, and intended for him; doth the doing of part excuse the neglect of the rest? And the lesser and much inferior part, the neglect of the more noble and principal parts of your business? Or would you think, that that servant did discharge himself faithfully, to the office or obligations under

which he is, who, when you commit to him in a stated course many sorts of business to be done, spends all his time about one, and neglects all the rest, and the main and most important parts of the business you have put into his hands? And I think it might be considered too to good purpose, whether (since there hath been so great a neglect of keeping up order, and government, and worship in families, and the thing that is at the first challenge replied by every one is lack of time,) the city is grown much richer than it was in those former days, when men could spare more time for such purposes than they do now!

Whatsoever there is of digression in this, I submit it to your own judgment, how needful and seasonable it is, and whether it be pertinent and proper. But I make no doubt, that, whensoever God shall restore religion in the world, and make it again to prosper, and more to prosper, as we hope he will; it will be by this means in very great part. Much will be done towards it, when it shall please God to stir up the hearts of those who are governors of families, parents, and masters, and to set them with effect on their duty in these things; when they shall be brought more to tender the precious immortal souls under their care, and be filled with a more just zeal against the licentiousness and growing debauchery of the world. I make no doubt, but when it shall be so, this will be found to do a great deal towards the reviving and restoring religion amongst men. There will be a time, when it shall be said severally, and singly concerning the families of Israel, that God is the God of all their families, (as it is in Jer. xxxi. 1.) and they shall be his people; so as that the relation shall not be only with the bulk

and body of the people in gross, but even with particular families. And this, it is said, should be in the latter days, if you look back to the close of the foregoing chapter, "In the latter days, ye shall consider it," Jer. xxx. 24. And, "at the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people." And it is said, it should be at such a time, as wherein there should be planting of vines upon the mountains of Samaria, Jer. xxxi. 5., and when "the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim should cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion, unto the Lord our God," ver. 6. When the people of Ephraim, that is, of the other ten tribes that use to go under that name, and those that did belong to Samaria, should go to Sion, as heretofore; a thing which certainly hath not yet been.

[4.] By means of the more common and general example of serious and exemplary religion in the professors of it. That is one great means, by which we may suppose the Spirit of God will work much, when it hath made religion to revive and live in some, to make their exemplary walking the means of diffusing religion unto others. Religion is now, as it is exemplified in the walking and practice of the most, a very little alluring thing, very little amiable; it carries little of invitation in it, little by which we may suppose it capable of proselyting the world, and captivating men generally to the love of it. The mean, low, abject spirit that is discovered by some, and the contentious, jangling, and quarrelsome spirit that is discovered by others, carry little of allurements in them to strangers, and signify little to the making of proselytes, and the winning of persons to the love of religion. We have reason

to expect that God will work mightily to make religion spread, by a certain aptitude that there shall be in it, when grown more lively and more vigorous, and a brighter shining and more glorious thing in the world, to attract hearts into the good liking of it.

We go on to speak,

(2.) Of its more immediate and direct influence upon the souls themselves to be wrought upon; which was the second head propounded to be spoken to. And so we are to reckon, that its greater influence (when there shall be such an effusion of the Spirit as we have been speaking of) will show itself in these two great and noble effects. 1. In numerous conversions; and, 2. In the high improvement and growth of those who sincerely embrace religion, their eminent holiness: which, when we consider, will make the matter we were last speaking of more apprehensible to us, what example may do to the spreading of it yet further and further as things once growing grow apace, especially such things as are themselves of a very growing and diffusive nature. The scripture speaks very much in many places to both these purposes.

[1.] There are many passages of scripture that respect the matter of the church's increase by numerous conversions; which is an increase as to its extent, as the other will be as to its glory. To instance in some few of the passages, that speak of the enlargement of the church by numerous conversions. We are told in Isa. ii. 2. &c. what shall come to pass in the last days. You have these two forms of expression, "The latter days," and, "The last days." The expression of the latter days doth more generally, according to the language of the

Jews, intend the times of the Messiah. They divided time into these three great parts, the time or age before the law, the age under the law, and the age (as they called it) of the Messiah. The expression is here, "The last days," which seems rather to import the latter part of the latter time, as there is still later and later, till it come to the very last. Now "in the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house," which is spoken by way of allusion to Sion, and the temple that stood upon that mountain, "shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people, and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isa. ii. 2—4. Such a time as that the world hath not yet known, so as that it should be said generally concerning it, that this great effusion of the Spirit, and such a cessation from hostilities and wars in the world, should be concomitant and conjunct with one another: we have not had hitherto opportunity to observe a coincidence of these two things. To the same purpose is that in the prophecy of Micali, which I mention as being of so near affinity with the very letter of this text. "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall

be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob," &c. Mic. iv. 1, 2. The same words as before, with very little variation. And that passage of a great prince's dream, of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which became a great mountain, and filled the earth, Dan. ii. 34, 35. I can, for my part, neither understand it in so carnal a sense as some do, nor in so limited a sense as others. Certainly it must signify some greater thing than we have yet seen. And such numerous accessions to the church by the power of the Holy Ghost in converting work, seem plainly intended and pointed out, Isa. liv. 1. "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate (of her that was so) than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." There should be a far greater fruitfulness than in the time of their more formed, stable church state, when they appeared a people in covenant-relation, married to God. This, though spoken directly and immediately of the Jewish church, means in and by them the universal gospel church, whom that church did in some sort typically represent. "Enlarge the place of thy tent, (so it follows, ver. 2, 3.) and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes: for thou shalt break forth on the right hand, and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." The like is in Isa. lxvi. 6. &c. "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord

that rendereth recompense to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a manchild. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once?" What can this intend, but some such mighty effusion of the Spirit, by which there shall be great collections and gatherings in of souls as it were on a sudden? To the same purpose in Isa. lx. 5. "Thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, (the islanders, or those that inhabit the more maritime places,) and the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." This is introduced in ver. 4. "Lift up thine eyes round about and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee, thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side." And ver. 8. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" Gathering in like great flocks of doves, that, like a dense, opaquous cloud, darken the air as they fly! Which numerous increase is most emphatically signified by the apt and elegant metaphor used, Psa. cx. 3. where it is said the subjects of Christ's kingdom should be multiplied as dew from the "womb of the morning." That is a vast and spacious womb; imagine how innumerable drops of dew distil out from thence; such shall the multitude of the converts be in the christian church. That such scriptures have been fulfilling ever since the first dawnings of christianity, there is no doubt; but the magnificence of the expressions of many of these prophecies seems yet to be very far from being answered by correspondent

effects. That passage in Joel ii. 28. where it is said that the Spirit shall be poured forth upon all flesh, we are told, it is true, in Acts ii. 16. that it had its accomplishment: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet," saith Peter, when the people began to wonder at what they saw, upon that strange pouring forth of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. But it is plain that he did not intend that the completion of that prophecy was confined to that point of time: for afterwards, in ver. 38, 39. he tells them that were now awakened, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" that they must "repent and be baptized, and they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For," saith he, "the promise (that promise, most apparently, that he had reference to before) is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." So that all that was intended in that prophecy is not fulfilled, till God hath done calling. And many other scriptures seem to intimate that there shall be a time of far more general calling than hath been hitherto; when the receiving and gathering in of the Jews shall be as life from the dead, as a resurrection from the dead, Rom. xi. 15. And when "the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in," ver. 25. The way of speaking implies that that fulness or plenitude was yet behind, to succeed after the apostle's time; and no such time hath succeeded yet.

[2.] There are many scriptures also that speak of the great improvement and growth of christians by the immediate work of the Spirit of God. When I say immediate, I do not mean as if it did work without means; but that by the means it doth itself immediately reach its subject; and therefore that

all the operations of the Spirit, whether in converting or in building up of souls, lie not in the instruments, but strike through all, so as to reach their subject. But that only by the by. Many scriptures speak of the great improvement of the church in point of holiness ; so that it shall increase not only in extent, but in glory, and in respect of the lustre, loveliness, and splendour of religion in it ; that it shall become a much more beautiful and attractive thing, according to the representation which it shall have in the profession and conversation of them that sincerely embrace it. Which I suppose to be more especially pointed at in such passages as these ; “ Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people ; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising,” Isa. lx. 1—3. This speaks that religion should be so glorious a thing in its own subject, as by that means to be inviting and attractive to those who were without the church ; and so doth directly and immediately speak of such an effect as should be wrought by the Spirit of God upon persons seriously religious themselves, to make them far to excel and outshine the glory of former time and ages. This also is the more peculiar aspect and reference of that prophecy in Mal. iv. 2. “ But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing under his wings.” That is, in that day of the Lord spoken of in ver. 1. “ Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven ; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that

cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

Here is a prediction of such an operation of the Spirit, as hath the actual fearers of God already for the subject of it; upon them the Sun of righteousness shall arise with reviving, cherishing beams, and make them spring, and prosper, and flourish, even as calves of the stall, as it is there expressed. Religion will not then be such a faint, languid, impotent thing, as now it is, that makes men differ very little from other men; makes them but to look, and walk, and converse as others do.

[3.] Other scriptures speak of both these effects together; and so of the increase of the church both ways at once, both in extent and glory. As I reckon all those may be understood to have that import that speak of the new heavens and the new earth that should be in the latter times: which are only metaphorical expressions; the heaven and the earth being the universe, making up the frame and compages* of nature. These expressions are only borrowed, and denote how universal and glorious a change should be in the world; for these new heavens and that new earth are specified by the same adjunct, "wherein dwelleth righteousness," in one of those texts. We have it mentioned twice in the prophecy of Isaiah, that he would "create new heavens, and a new earth," chap. lxv. 17. lxvi. 22. and in 2 Pet. iii. 13. that in these there should dwell righteousness. The renovation should consist in this; and both the universality and the intensive perfection of it are signified. The heavens and the earth, that is, the whole frame of things, should be the subject of the alteration; and this

* A system of many parts united.

alteration should be a renovation, the making of them new, that is, better; as the newness of things is an ordinary scripture expression of the excellency of them. Now the creation of these must refer to this time of the great restitution: as John speaks, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away," Rev. xxi. 1. The former frame of things was all vanished and gone; nothing was like its former self, but "all things were made new," as is added, ver. 5. A day wherein there should be, as it were, a new making of the world. The following texts also speak of that double increase of the church jointly, Isa. xxxii. 14, 15. A time and state of great desolation is spoken of as preceding, and to be continued. Till when? "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high;" and what then? "The wilderness shall be a fruitful field." There is the taking in of more from the world, extending the territories of the church further, the inclosing of much more of the wilderness than hath hitherto been. "And the fruitful field be counted for a forest:" that which was before reckoned a fruitful field, be counted to have been but as a forest, in comparison of what it shall be improved to: there is the increase of the church in respect of the liveliness and power of religion among converts. So in chap. xxxv. 1, 2. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

And both these effects, numerous conversions and the high improvements of converts, are so con-natural, so of the same kind, do so very well agree with one another, that we may very well suppose them to go together, that the former will be accompanied with the latter. For this great effusion of the Spirit we must understand to be sanative, intended for the healing of a diseased world, and to repair the corrupted forlorn state of things ; and therefore must be proportionable to the state of the case, in reference whereto it is to be a means of cure. It is very apparent, that wickedness as it is the more diffusive is always the more malignant. The diffusion and the malignity are wont to accompany one another ; just as it is with diseases—the plague and other distempers that are noisome and dangerous, they are always more mortal as they are more contagious and spreading ; and so are extensively and intensively worse at the same time. And it must be proportionably so in the means of cure ; there must be such a pouring forth of the Spirit, that will answer the exigency of the case in both respects, that there be very numerous conversions, and a great improvement of converts unto higher and more excellent pitches of religion, than have been usually known in former times.

Obj. But here it may be said, that it is very difficult to conceive, how all this should be, considering what the present state and posture of the world is. As if we cast our eyes about us, and consider how it is in vast parts of it yet overrun with paganism, in others with mohammedanism, in others with antichristian pollutions and abominations. When we consider how it is generally sunk in atheism and oblivion of God, drenched in wickedness ; and even

that part of it that is called christian, how little it is better than the rest. The great doctrines of the christian religion, the incarnation, the death, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the future judgment, and the eternal states of men, all become even as antiquated things ! professedly believed for fashion's sake, because it is not convenient to pretend to be of no religion. But yet all these things lie with the most as ineffectual, insipid, unoperative notions in their minds that do nothing ; and notwithstanding which they are and practise, just as they would do, if they believed no such things. When we consider this to be the present state and posture of the world, it is hard to conceive how such a change as this is should come. And many may be apt to say in reference to this renovation or regeneration of the church, the restitution of religion, as Nicodemus said concerning the regeneration of a particular person, " How can these things be ? "

Ans. Indeed the long-continued restraints of the acts of absolute omnipotency make it even to seem but equal to impotency ; and men expect as little from the one as from the other. When great and extraordinary things have not been done through a long tract of time, they are no more expected or looked for from the most potent cause, than they are from a most impotent. And therefore, when any great thing is done for the church and interest of God in the world, it comes under this character, " things that we looked not for," Isa. lxiv. 3. Things that do even surprise and transcend expectation, and which no man would have thought of. Men are very unapt to entertain the belief and expectation of things, that are so much above the verge and

sphere of ordinary observation. We expect to see what we have been wont to see ; and men are apt to measure their faith by their eyes for the most part in reference to such things, that that can be done which they have seen done ; but are hardly brought to raise their faith and expectation to higher pitches than so.

To make things therefore as conceivable as we can, we shall point out briefly in what way and by what methods and steps we may suppose so great a change to be brought about by such an effusion of the Spirit. For, as was said, it will not do the business with most, that the Spirit of God can do all this, which will be granted at the very first hearing : but a lively apprehension of these events to be brought about is not ordinarily begotten, but by seeing a way traced out, from point to point, and from step to step, how and by what degrees such a work may be carried on ; and then the representation in that way being somewhat more lively, the impression that is made by it on the spirits of men is accordingly more lively. But of this more particularly hereafter.

I shall shut up the present discourse with desiring you to remind and reflect upon the tendency of all this ; that our souls may be possessed with a serious apprehension, and thence have a lively hope begotten in them, of such a time and state of things to come, wherein religion shall prosper and flourish in the world, though now it be at so low an ebb. I may say to you as Paul did to Agrippa, “ Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ? ” Acts xxvi.8. Why should it be thought an incredible thing, that there should be a resurrection of religion ? “ Thy dead men shall

live, and together with my dead body shall they arise." He hath said it, who knows how to make it good; who is the resurrection and the life, Isa. xxvi. 19.

And really it would signify much to us, to have our hearts filled with present hope; though we have no hope (as was formerly supposed, admitting that supposition) of seeing it with our own eyes in our own days. Such a hope would however not be unaccompanied with a vital joy. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad;" though it was above two thousand years before. Plain it is, there is not a more stupifying, benumbing thing in all the world than mere despair. To look upon such a sad face and aspect of things through the world as we have before our eyes; to look upon it despairingly, and with the apprehension that it never will, never can be better; nothing can more stupify and bind up the powers of our souls, and sink us into a desponding meanness of spirit. But hope is a kind of anticipated enjoyment, and gives a present participation in the expected pleasantness of those days, how long soever they may yet be off from us. By such a lively hope we have a presentation, a feeling in our own spirits of what is to come, that should even make our hearts rejoice, and our bones to flourish as a herb. Religion shall not be an inglorious thing in the world always: it will not always be ignominious to be serious, to be a fearer of the Lord, to be a designer for heaven and for a blessed eternity. When these things which common and prevailing custom hath made ridiculous, with their own high reasonableness, shall have custom itself and a common reputation concurring, how will religion at that time lift up its head, when

there is such a blessed conjunction ! It is strange to think, that such very absurd things as the neglecting of God, the forgetting of eternity, the disregarding of men's souls and everlasting concerns, should even be justified by custom, so that nobody is ashamed of them, because they do but as other men do in these things. To be immersed all their lifetime in the world, to mind nothing else but earthly business, as if they were made all of earth, and only for earth ; such most absurd things even seem to be justified by common practice ; men are not ashamed of them because they are but like their neighbours. But when persons shall agree with one another in being serious, heavenly, avowing the fear of God, in express devotedness and subjection to him ; when the concurrence of common practice shall be taken in with the high reasonableness of the things themselves ; how magnificently will religion look in that day ! and if we would but labour so to represent the matter to ourselves beforehand ; by a lively hope of such a state of things we should have the anticipated enjoyment of the felicity of those times ; and have a great deal of reason, though it may be we are to suffer hard and grievous things in the meanwhile, to compose ourselves, and to enter upon that state of suffering very cheerfully ; to wait patiently and pray earnestly, that of so great a harvest of spiritual blessings to come upon the world in future time, we may have some first-fruits in the meantime : as it is not unusual, when some very great and general shower is ready to fall, that some previous scattering drops light here and there as fore-runners.

And we should encourage ourselves in the expectation of a present portion, sufficient for our

present turn and the exigency of our own case: for we have this comfortable consideration before us, that there is always so much of the Spirit to be had, that will serve the necessities of every christian who seriously seeks it. He will give his Spirit to his children who ask him, as readily surely as they that are evil will give good gifts to theirs. At all times there is so much of the Spirit to be had, as though it will not mend the world, will mend us; if it will not better the external state of things, it will better our spirits; and so if not keep off suffering, yet will prepare and qualify us for it; and that surely is a greater thing than to have suffering kept off; for that is but an external and natural evil, this internal and spiritual. It would be a great thing if persons would admit the conviction of this, (and there is not a plainer thing in all the world,) that patience is better than immunity from suffering: that great and noble effect of the Spirit of God upon the soul, whereby it is brought into an entire possession of itself! Is that to be compared with a little advantage that only my flesh and outward man is capable of? Good things are to be estimated by the greatness and nobleness of their subjects. Surely a good of the mind, of the soul, must needs be far better than that which is only a good of the body, of this perishing, external frame. And therefore for us, it is as great a thing as we can reasonably wish, that we may have such a portion of the Spirit imparted to us, that will qualify us to pass well and comfortably through any time. And have not we reason to expect this, even upon what is foretold us concerning what shall be done in the world hereafter? May not I look up with a great deal of hope and encouragement, and say,

“ Lord, that Spirit of thine that shall one day so flow down upon the world, may not I have some portion of it to answer my present necessities? And that Spirit, that can new make the world, that can create new heavens and a new earth, cannot that new make one poor soul? cannot it better one poor heart?” To have a new heart and a right spirit created and renewed in us, is better to us than all the world. And we have no reason to look up diffidently and with despondency, but with hearts full of expectation. He will give his Spirit to them that ask him.

SERMON VI.

PREACHED JUNE 12, 1678.

WE have told you wherein a good state for the church would consist, namely, in these two things concurring, the flourishing of religion and outward peace. I have said concurring; for if they should be so severed, as that external prosperity should go unaccompanied with much of the power and life of religion, the case would be much worse with the church of God rather than better. So true the observation is, that religion brought forth riches, and then the daughter destroyed the mother. We must say in this case somewhat 'like what they have been

wont to say, who would give a favourable representation of Epicurus and his doctrine concerning the matter of felicity, that would make his notion of it to consist of satisfaction of mind and indolency of the body. There must be a like concurrence of two such things to make up an entire and completely happy state to the church; principally, a prosperous state of religion, and then (that which would be very much helpful and accessory) a peaceful and sedate external state of things.

This being supposed, and having told you what sort of communication the Spirit is to be expected, we came to show the apt and appropriate usefulness of the means to the end. For the clearing of this we proposed to speak, 1. Of the efficacy; and, 2. Of the necessity of this mean or cause to bring about the end.

We are yet upon the former of these heads, the efficacy of this effusion of the Spirit to work a very happy state of things in the church of God. We have shown what it is easily supposable the Spirit may do towards this purpose, both by way of mediate and of immediate influence, both in producing numerous conversions, and then high improvements of converts; and in reference to both have mentioned many scriptures, and might many more, to let you see what we are taught and encouraged to expect.

We would now use some endeavour for the facilitating of our belief concerning this matter, and to render it more easily apprehensible and familiar to our own thoughts, that it might not be looked upon as an impossible thing, or as altogether unlikely and improbable to be brought to pass. To this purpose let us consider,

I. What hath been done in like kind heretofore.

II. In what way such a thing may be supposed to be brought about, by what steps, and in what method, and by the conspiracy and consent of what subordinate causes such a thing may be effected.

III. How suitable and congruous every way it is to the blessed God to do such a thing.

I. We may a little help ourselves in this matter by taking an estimate from what hath been unto what may be. Much hath been done in the like kind heretofore. You know how it was with the christian church in its beginnings, in its very *primordia*, when the light of the gospel was but dawning upon the world; how great and unexpected were the changes that were brought about then all on a sudden, partly in our Lord's time, and more especially when the Spirit was more eminently poured forth afterwards in the apostles' days, insomuch that you find the matter represented by such expressions as these, concerning Christ himself in his own time, "Behold, the whole world is gone after him," John xii. 19. So the anxious and vexed minds of the rulers amongst that people did suggest to them, "We have lost all, the whole world will be his proselytes at this rate." But especially, when the Spirit came to be poured forth after his resurrection and ascension, by that same means, "not by might or by power, but by Spirit," what strange things were done! And who that lived at that time, would then have expected such things to have been done, if it should have been foretold that twelve men should convert so great a part of the world? And with what musing, diffident spirits did they receive their own commissions and instructions when that strange thing was said to them, "Go

ye, and teach all nations." Suppose twelve persons should be picked out from among us, and such a charge given them, Go and proselyte the world unto serious religion ! Yet we know what was done. It was said in one place, " This Paul hath turned away much people," Acts xix. 26. this one man ; and in another, " Those that have turned the world upside down are come hither also," Acts xvii. 6. Thousands were converted at a sermon, the sound of the gospel flying to the utmost ends of the earth. And this was but in pursuance of what Christ foretold should be done by his Spirit. These men did not levy armies to carry religion abroad into the world ; when their hearts seemed to fail and sink within them, as despairing from the greatness of the enterprise, and the meanness of such agents as themselves were, they were only directed to stay and " wait" awhile, till they should " receive power" from on high, Acts i. 4. 8. And when at last it came, with what wonders did these men fill the world ! Christ told them, therefore, " It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you, and when he is come, he will convince the world," John xvi. 7, 8. We read it the Comforter : the word signifies (and it would be more fitly unto that purpose read) the Advocate, or the Pleader ; so the original word more properly imports. " When that mighty Pleader comes, my Agent, that I intend shall negotiate my affairs for me (when I am gone) against an infidel world, then let him alone, he shall deal with the world, as infidel and wicked as it is. ' He shall convince of sin, and righteousness, and judgment.' Whereas I have been reproached as a blasphemer, and

a deceiver of the people, and one that have designed only to set up for myself, and to acquire a name and reputation among men, he shall urge on my behalf the sin of the world in not believing in me, and my righteousness, both personal and imputable, capable of being applied unto others ; and he shall urge efficaciously the business of judgment upon the usurping prince of this world, and dethrone him, and cast him down." And so it did succeed in very great part.

And how lively and vigorous was the religion of the primitive christians at that time, those first owners and professors of the christian faith ! how did heavenliness, spirituality, and the life and power that was from above, sparkle in their profession and conversation, that one might see them walking like so many pieces of immortality dropped down from heaven, and tending thitherward ; all full of God, and full of Christ, and full of heaven, and full of glory ; and this world was nothing to them, trampled upon as a despicable, contemptible thing.

Now we may say with ourselves, that which could have been done, and we see was done, may still be done. " Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened ? Is his arm shortened ? "

II. It would very much facilitate the belief of such a thing, at least the apprehension of it as very possible, to consider in what easy and apt ways, and by how fit and suitable a method such a work as this may be carried on ; and it will be, I reckon, to good purpose to insist a little here ; for when the workings of any extraordinary divine power have been long withheld and restrained, (as was said,) the thoughts and apprehensions of such a thing very much vanish out of the minds of men ; and

they expect generally as little from absolute omnipotency as from mere impotency, because their eyesight is usually the measure of their expectation. Therefore the more easy steps we may suppose to be taken in such a work, so much the more apprehensible the thing will be, and so much the more vivid the apprehension, and the deeper the impression upon our hearts ; which is the great thing we should aim at in the hearing of any gospel truth or doctrine whatsoever.

Now it must be acknowledged, that a very great and extraordinary exertion of divine power, the power of the blessed Spirit, is necessary in this case. Such an extraordinary effort of absolute omnipotency there was at first to create the world : but when once it was created, there was a settlement of a certain law or course of nature, and a fixing of all second causes in their proper stations and subordinations, in which the affairs of the world have ever since been carried on in an equal and very little varied course ; which hath given atheists occasion to cavil, “ All things are as they were from the beginning, even unto this day.” This may assist us to apprehend, how, things being once by so wonderful a hand put well onwards towards a good state, the course may be continued, and the great interest of religion improved more and more. Suppose it be somewhat proportionably in this new creation, the making new heavens and a new earth, as it was in the making of the world at first. There must once be an extraordinary effort of omnipotency or an almighty power. But that being once supposed, it is easily apprehensible, how many things may concur and fall in, what a conspiracy of inferior and subservient causes there may be, to promote and help

on the reviving of religion in the world. That extraordinary effusion of the Spirit therefore once supposed, we will go on to particulars that will be easily supposable to succeed, and to be subservient and ministering causes in this work.

1. There will be a great observation, no doubt, of whatsoever shall be at first done in this kind, for the recovery of religion in the world. It is a matter that will naturally draw observation. The course, wherein the interest and kingdom of God is ordinarily promoted in the world, is rather governed by that maxim, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation," Luke xvii. 20. The affairs of it are carried on in a more still, and calm, and silent way. But when God does (as we must suppose him to do) step out of his course in this case; no doubt that first effect, or the Spirit of God, when it comes to shake the spirits of men somewhat generally, and makes them bestir themselves; this cannot but be a very noted thing. If any considerable number in one such city as this should all on a sudden be struck, and a remarkable change be made upon them; if several notoriously debauched and dissolute persons should become very serious, sober, praying men; some noted to be very great worldlings, that one could never hear any thing from but what savoured of earth or an earthly design, now become eminently godly, spiritual, heavenly in all their conversation:—this would be very much observed and taken notice of, as somewhat a strange and new thing. And,

2. Upon such observation, the minds of men will be filled with wonder, and much musing. "What a strange thing is this, that such a great number of people will not be as they have been,

and do as they have done ! Such as could drink, and swear, and rant with the rest of their dissolute neighbours, are now taken up all of a sudden, and do no such thing ! We can hear them speaking of God and heaven and eternity, unto whom all thoughts of any such thing seemed perfect strangers ! ” Men will be very apt to be mused, when such a thing as this shall be.

3. That musing and wonder will beget discourse about it from person to person. It will grow, as we may easily apprehend, into matter of talk, what changes appear in such and such.

4. Such discourse, it is very supposable, may put many persons upon search and inquiry ; first into the truth of the matter of fact, and then into the tendency of such a thing, whither it drives, what kind of change it is. Is it true, yea or no, that such things really are ? And when once it comes to be found really true, that there are great numbers of persons upon whom there is a very eminent and remarkable turn and change, either to make debauched persons become religious, or such as were before religious to become more visibly serious, and lively, and active in the business of religion ; when it is found, I say, to be so, the matter itself, which such persons come to be changed to, naturally comes under inquiry—Whither do these persons tend ? What do these impressions, that are now upon their minds, put them upon ? And it is found, that they are urged by such impressions to mind God and the Redeemer of souls more, the concernments of eternity and another world ; and to help all others to do so too, as much as in them lies. These things do very aptly succeed to one another. And so far the case was like this,

in Acts ii. upon that first eminent effusion of the Spirit. The matter came to be "noised abroad," ver. 6. and "the multitude came together." And, "they were all amazed, and marvelled," ver. 7. Very great amazement was upon the minds of men. Though it is true there was somewhat miraculous in the case, that is the power of speaking variety of languages all of a sudden; and we suspend any judgment for the present, about what we are to expect hereafter in the church of God of the same thing or of anything of like kind. But to have so much, as is of ordinary and common concernment to souls wrought and done, as hath been mentioned somewhat generally; this cannot but infer much observation, much wonder and amazement of mind with others, much discourse and talk upon the subject, and thereupon inquiry both into the truth and tendency of the matter of fact.

5. Upon such inquiry, we may suppose there will ensue approbation; that is, at least a judicious approbation, that shall go as far as the judgment and conscience, though it may not suddenly descend upon the heart and affections. We may promise ourselves that, such being the nature of religious concernments, and their high reasonableness so very apparent. What is it that these men drive at? whither do these new impressions on their minds carry them? Why, only to mind the great Lord, and Original, and Author of all things! to give over living, as the most of men have heretofore done, in a total oblivion and neglect of their own original! How strange is it for men lately come into being, to live in this world and never think, How came we into being? How came there to be such a thing as man on earth? such a world as this? such

various orders of creatures in it? All that religion tends to, when it comes to revive in the spirits of men, is but to engage them to look back to their own original, to consider whence they sprang; and what duty they owe there, what reverence, and fear, and love; and what expectations they may have from that great and eternal and all-comprehending Being, from whom they and all things did proceed: and whereas they find themselves in a lapse and apostacy with the rest of mankind, and have the discovery of a Redeemer, and of God restoring and recovering souls by him; to consider, what trust, what love, what subjection, what entire devotedness is justly claimed as most due and fit to be paid to him. When religion aims at no other things than these; we may promise ourselves, that the inquiry will end in approbation. All this is equal, and righteous, and good; men can have nothing to say against it. The concernments of religion are of that sort and kind, that they will admit of search and bear an inquiry; and men are only therefore not approvers of religion at least, because they inquire not, and so can understand no reason imaginable why men should pretend to any religion at all. But the same reasons will urge a thousand times more for the greatest and deepest seriousness in religion. For the mere formality of religion, without the substance and soul, is the most absurd and ridiculous thing in all the world, and for which least is to be said. The profession of downright atheism were a great deal more rational than to pretend to the belief of such a Deity that can be pleased with trifles and shadows; than to worship such a thing for a God, that cannot tell whether I love him or not, and fear him or not, and have a

neart really propense and devoted to him or not. The inquiry and discussion of the case must be supposed to infer great appobation.

6. That is likely to infer an apprehension of somewhat divine in it. When it shall be seen that men are strangely wrought upon, and very great changes made upon them; and when being discoursed with, and the things unto which their spirits tend being examined and searched into, they are found to speak words of truth and soberness, and not like mad and distracted men that are beside themselves; as the apostles were fain to apologize once and again, when so strange things began to be wrought by their ministry at the first, in Acts ii. 15, 16. and chap. xxvi. 25. This must be supposed also very apt and likely to succeed, that there will be an apprehension in the case, that there is something divine in all this; some misgiving or suspicion of it; "Surely it is of God, that there is this change and turn upon the spirits of so many men! Surely there is some divine hand in it!" We find that there were such apprehensions of somewhat divine in the matter, when such great things were wrought at first by the ministry of the apostles. The most malicious enemies were full of doubt, "whereunto this would grow," Acts v. 24. And one of their wisest men saith, in verse 39, "If it [this thing] be of God."—That "if" imports a suspicion, some doubt and apprehension of the thing as not improbable: "Perhaps this is of God, that there are begun such alterations in many men; that those who lived before as if they were altogether made of earth, now are come to mind nothing but heaven, and eternity, and the concernments of an other world. It is very likely that there is a divine

hand in this matter ; for the more we inquire and search, the less we have to say against what these men do ; we cannot see but it is highly reasonable that men should live, as they say we should, in more serious observance of, and devotedness and love to, the great Lord of heaven and earth, and the Redeemer of sinners." And,

7. Hereupon succeeds naturally a favourable inclination towards religion in those who have hitherto been strangers, at least, to the power and life of it. When they see it sparkle in the conversations of others ; when they see persons that were become like other men, for that is the present state of the world, and it is too much to be feared that it will grow more and more so, that those who have been very forward professors of religion fall to decays, and their profession, like an old garment, grows threadbare, and is worn off from them by piecemeal, and they cease to be what they were : family orders are thrown off, no worship, no calling upon God ; they let themselves be ingulfed of the world, as if they were here in the world for nothing else than to drive designs for a few days ; eternity and everlasting concerns being quite forgot :—when it shall be said, that men, whatever they were before, are awakening out of this drowsy, dead sleep, and returning from that dreadful apostacy ; and a spirit of seriousness, and life, and vigour, begins to show itself ; and religion and holiness (as I was saying) shall sparkle in the lives of them ; in whose conversation there was hardly the least glimmering of it appearing before :—then so amiable and lovely a thing, as well as highly reasonable, religion is, that it will draw favourable inclination ; especially when that apprehension goes along, that there is certainly

some divine impression upon men's minds, that makes them bestir themselves and alter their course from what it was, and that induces so many to do thus as it were at once. For there is a natural reverence of what is apprehended to be divine; this naturally draws a kind of veneration. It was indeed strange how the world could be imposed upon to believe such figments and fables as they did; but being made to believe them, we see what was the natural operation of that veneration, which resides in the spirits of men, of things apprehended divine. For the image that dropped down from Jupiter, mentioned in Acts xix. 35. it is strange how the people could be made to believe that such an image fell down out of heaven: but being made to believe it, nature followed its own course; that is, most highly to reverence what they apprehended to be of a divine descent, and what came from above. All the city, all that city of Ephesus, was a worshipper of the image that they were told came down from Jupiter. A favourable propension there will be towards religion when once men come generally to take notice of it as a divine thing; of divine descent, as it is of a divine tendency. And so it was in that first great work of this kind, which we read of in Acts ii. That numerous multitude of converts, three thousand at one sermon, continued in "breaking of bread from house to house, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," verse 46. "praising God, and having favour with all the people," verse 47. Religion, when it comes to be itself and to look like itself, will very much attract favour from all who behold the genuine natural workings and tendencies of it.

8. Hereupon doth unavoidably ensue a general esteem for serious religion, which will signify a great deal to this. When serious religion shall, by these means, be brought into credit, then the work will drive on apace, and the chariot-wheels move easily. Let us but bethink ourselves, what the reputation even of so despicable a thing as wickedness itself doth in the world ; how it spreads, when common practice hath once given it a reputation. Things which, at other times, persons would have been ashamed of, or even that they should be suspected concerning them, afterwards they come to glory in. And when once the restraint of shame is gone off from the spirits of men, it is a strange liberty they find to do wickedly ; now they can easily go from one wickedness to another, from bad to worse, and still to worse ; for the restraint is gone that bound up their spirits before. When the shame then of being seriously religious shall cease, and it shall become a reputation in the world ; think, what that will signify in the case of so highly reasonable and beautiful a thing as religion in itself is. Common reputation gives a patronage to so horrid, so ignominious a thing as wickedness. What will not so lovely and praiseworthy a thing, as religion is in the very heart and conscience of men that allow themselves to consider it, gain of reputation and by it in such a case ; when every man shall be the more esteemed of, by how much the more he appears a sincerely religious man ; when no man shall be afraid to avow himself a fearer of the great Lord of heaven and earth, but this shall be reckoned in every one's account a high glory ; when every one shall be ready to give suffrage to it, and to say, It is reasonable we should all be so ? Then may we

suppose religion to be riding on prosperously, conquering and to conquer; then may we expect the arrows of the great Author of it to be sharp in the hearts of men; the way of access will be easy into the inwards of men's souls, the great truths and doctrines of religion will come under no prejudice; men will not be shy and ashamed to entertain them, or afraid what the tendency of entertaining them will be, or what course they shall be thereby engaged in, that may possibly prove injurious to them in point of reputation or worldly interest one way or another.

These things being all taken together, it seems we have a pretty apt method, and a representation of fair and easy steps, in which we may suppose such a work to be carried on; when once there is that great effort of the almighty power of the Spirit, to cause somewhat general rousings and awakenings in the spirits of men, to make them a little bestir themselves and look about them, with respect to the concernments of the Maker of this world, and their relation and tendency to another world. And when we see how such a thing may be carried on from step to step, the apprehension of it should not be thrown aside as very remote and alien, and as if it were altogether unlikely that any such thing should ever be done in the world. You know that great inundations, as they gradually spread in circuit, so they increase and grow more copious by a continual accession of new rivulets and springs to them, wherever they spread: so it is in such a work as this of the Spirit of God. That almighty Spirit, the further it goes, the more it engages and takes in the concurrence of the spirits of men, as so many rivulets into the great and common inundation. For

the expression of “pouring forth” the Spirit seems to favour that metaphor, and to look towards it; as the communications of the Spirit are frequently in scripture spoken of under the same metaphor of “streams of water, rivers of water.” So it is also in a common conflagration; (the workings of the Spirit are represented by both these elements;) the further the fire spreads still the more matter it meets with, the more combustible matter; and that way still more and more increases itself, even intensively, according as it spreads more extensively: because it still meets with more fuel to feed upon. We might thus render this business very easy and familiar to our own thoughts, by considering how such a communication of the Spirit once begun and set on foot doth spread and propagate itself, even in an ordinary and easy way and method, further and further.

I shall only close at present with one hint, which may point out to us one thing more, as a way to make this apprehension most familiar to us. It would certainly be most clearly apprehensible how such a work may be wrought by getting as much of it as is possible exemplified in ourselves upon our own souls. If once we come to find and feel the Spirit of the living God seizing our spirits, coming with an almighty and irresistible power upon us; if we can but feel the fire burn within, and find it refining us, consuming our dross, melting and molifying us, new moulding us, quickening and enlarging us, it will be very easy to apprehend then how such a work may be carried on in the world. For if I have but the notion of a unit in my mind, I can soon apprehend a larger number; it is but adding one unit to that, and another to that. and so

on, till I come to a greater number. If I can but find and experience such a mighty operation of that blessed Spirit upon my own soul, it is easy then to conceive thus : if it be so with another, and another, and another, religion will, in this way, become a very lively, prosperous thing in the world. It is but the multiplying of instances, and the thing is done : and he that can do so by me, can do the same by another, and another, and so onwards. And methinks we should not rest ourselves satisfied till we find somewhat, till we find more of this within ourselves. Oh what a miserable thing is a christian when he is dead ! We look with a great deal of compassion upon the death of anything ; but the case claims so much the more, by how much the life is more noble that is extinct or seems extinct ; or when the life once supposed to have been, now appears as if it were quite extinct. Is the expiration of this natural life a thing to be beheld with pity ? What is it to lose, or to appear at least deprived of the life of a child of God ? To be destitute of such a life, which I have at least pretended to, and carried some appearance and semblance of. The death of a peasant is a considerable thing, and it were barbarous not to take notice of it with feeling : but when it comes to be talked, a great man is dead, a nobleman, a prince ; this makes a great noise and ring in the world ; and such a person having been of any use and account in his age, his exit is not without a great lamentation. If I had but a finger dead, it would be an affliction : but if I look into myself, lo, there I behold the death of a soul, a reasonable, intelligent spirit ; that ought to live the life of God, devoted to God, in commerce with God : I look into it, and it

is dead ! Oh how intolerable a thing should this be to me ! till I find some revivings, some stirrings, some indications of life ; that is, till I find religion live ; that I have somewhat more than an empty, naked, spiritless form of religion ; that I can now go and pray, and have life in my prayer ; go and hear the word and find life in my hearing. Of all deaths there is none so dreadful and so to be lamented as that of religion, and certainly most of all in ourselves, that my religion is a dead thing. How impatient should I be to find it revived ! And if I will but be restless in this, and make it my daily business importunately to supplicate the Father of Spirits, “ Take pity of thine own offspring, let me not lie languishing still in death ;” and I at last obtain a merciful audience, (as it is plainly said, that “ the heart shall live that seeks God,”) then I have such an exemplification in my own soul of the matter we have been discoursing of, as that I can easily represent to myself : “ When such a work is done in others as is done in my own soul, and comes to be made common amongst others ; then will religion be a very lively, prosperous, flourishing thing in the world.” And that certainly is the best way of all others to make this thing apprehensible to ourselves, to get the thoughts of it familiarized to us, in how easy a way religion should grow and spread among men.

SERMON VII.

PREACHED JUNE 19, 1678.

It was thought requisite to lay before you some considerations that might facilitate the apprehension and belief of the revival and prosperous state of religion in the world. Three were mentioned to that purpose.

I. The consideration of what hath been done in this kind heretofore when the Spirit was so eminently poured forth at first.

II. The consideration by how easy steps and in how apt a method it is supposable that such a work may be done.

These have been spoken of.

If once it please God to say he will do such and such things, we need not be told how. "Is any thing too hard for me? saith the Lord." That should be enough for us; but we find that commonly it is not enough, experience doth too commonly show that; and, therefore, the supposition of such a gradual progress as hath been mentioned, doth much facilitate the apprehension of such a thing. Though we do not imply or suppose in all this that anything the less power is exerted, but only that it is put forth in a way more familiar to our thoughts. As in the creation of the world there was an exertion even of absolute power, the almightiness (as I

may speak) of power ; but that absolute power soon became ordinate, and that order and chain of causes, and the method of their operations and peculiar virtues, which we are wont to call by the name of nature, universal and particular nature, soon came to be fixed and settled, according whereto God hath since continued the world, and propagated the individuals of every sort and kind of creatures, or propagated the kind in those individuals. This is not to suppose more and less power, but is only a various exertion of the same power. But when power is exerted in this latter way, it is more apprehensible by us, how it goes forth to do such and such things. It is said, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God,” Heb. xi. 3. By faith, how is that? Why faith is said in the clause a little before to be “the evidence of things not seen.” We were none of us at the making of the world, we saw not how things were done then, but we have the matter imparted to us by God himself, we have a divine testimony in the case—the history committed into sacred records, by which we are informed, not only that the world was made, but how it was made, by what steps, and by how gradual a progression the great God went on in the doing of that stupendous work. And hereupon it is said, “By faith we understand,” that is, as the original word signifies, by faith we come to have the formed, explicit notion in our minds, to have distinct thoughts and apprehensions how such a work was done. Thus we learn how much was done such a day, and how much such a day ; light created the first day, the second the firmament, the third the earth, dry land, and the seas or the gathering together of the waters into one place, and

then herbs, and trees, and beasts, and so forth, according to their several kinds. Now this begets a clearer and more distinct apprehension in our minds of the way of making the world, than if it had been only said that the world was at first made by God. We understand it by faith, have a notion begot in our minds clear and distinct by faith, inasmuch as, or so far as, the testimony is distinct and clear which we have concerning this matter. Though it is true, reason would go far to demonstrate that this world had a beginning, yet reasoning could never have helped us distinctly to understand in what steps or in how easy and fit a method that great work was carried on. So now in making the world anew, erecting the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, wherein it shall dwell; we certainly can more distinctly apprehend how that work is done, if it be represented as done by such a kind of gradation as you have heard of, than if we were put to it to conceive it done all at once. There is no less power required to the continuing of this world as it is, than was to the making of it what it is, for it is the continual exertion of the same power that doth it. But our thoughts are not so liable to be surprised, (they are not at all surprised,) to see a continual succession of things in the natural way of production. It gives us no difficulty or trouble to see how children are born, how the kinds of other creatures are propagated; whereas it would greatly surprise us to think of men, and beasts, and trees, and herbs, all starting up of a sudden out of nothing. Though we cannot, upon a reasonable consideration of the case, but acknowledge that it were as easy a thing for God to have created man as he did Adam, by an immediate hand, as it is to continue the race

of mankind in that way wherein he doth it; the operation would not be harder to him; yet it was, it seems, in the judgment of his infinite wisdom, less apt, and it would be harder and more unapprehensible unto us. So, we must acknowledge too, that it were no harder a thing for God “of stones to raise up children unto Abraham,” to make christians proselytes to religion that way than to convert men by the gospel; but this, which he hath chosen to be his ordinary way, we have reason and obligation to account the fittest way, and it is a way more familiar and easily conceivable to our thoughts. And therefore it doth much towards the facilitating the apprehension and belief of this great change to consider by how easy steps, and in how apt a method such a work as this may be done; and this will be very considerable unto persons that take notice (which any observing man would) how little apt the wise and holy God is to step out of his usual course, further than the plain necessity of the case, in reference to such or such great ends of his, doth require.

But then add we hereto—

III. The consideration, how highly suitable it is to the blessed God to do this work. Doth it not look like a Godlike work? Doth it not carry the aspect of a Godlike undertaking and performance, a thing worthy of God, to restore religion and improve it much further in the world? We shall show in what particular respects it is suitable to him.

1. It is very suitable to his most mysterious wisdom, the glory whereof it is to do things that none could contrive to do besides; and especially to rescue and recover what seemed lost and hopeless, when the sentence of death was, as it were, actually thereupon, that is, religion. This is the

attribute of divine wisdom, to recover things out of so dreadful a degeneracy, to retrieve matters when the case was so desperate unto all men's apprehensions. It is the choice of divine wisdom to do so, to find an expedient even in the last necessity; according to that monumental name which Abraham put upon the mount, where he was to have sacrificed his son, "Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will see," or "The Lord will provide and take care;" an instance thought fit to be upon record unto all succeeding time, as a discovery what the choice of the divine wisdom is, that is, to take things even when they are desperate, and to find out an expedient to salve all. An instance like to that I remember Plutarch* takes notice of, that one Metella, in a certain great exigence, was to have been sacrificed, but was prevented by the miraculous substitution of a heifer in the room of the intended victim; so possibly pagans might have fabulously imitated what some way or other they came to have heard from the sacred records. But so the case seems to be with religion, when God shall so wonderfully retrieve it, as it was with the heir of the promise, the knife just at the very throat: there was a contrivance suitable to the wisdom of God, to hit upon this critical juncture of time, to rescue him from so near a death when he seemed even upon expiring. And as he was fetched from death even in a figure, (his father "received him from thence in a figure," Heb. xi. 19.) so it must be with religion too. The son of the freewoman, Isaac, was the emblem of it; it is, as it were, in a like figure to be fetched from death by a kind of resurrection from the dead, "life from

* Plutarchi Parallel. inter Op. Moral. Edit. H. Steph. [Græc.] Vol. i. p. 550.

the dead," as the apostle speaks, when the time shall be of bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, and the saving of all Israel. How glorious the display of divine wisdom to let such gross darkness cover the world, so black and gloomy a day be upon it that shall issue at last in so much brightness and such glorious light, even in the evening, as it is in Zech. xiv. 7. 9. wherein the Lord shall be king over all the earth, and "there shall be one Lord and his name one," ver. 9. Then comes that bright and glorious evening after a black and gloomy day; not perfect darkness, there is not such in the spiritual world when things are at the worst, as they use to say there is not in the natural world. So it is there said, that "the light shall not be clear nor dark," ver. 6. It shall be as if it were "neither day nor night," ver. 7. In that day, (and it shall be one day known to the Lord, neither day nor night,) at evening time it shall be light. You know how great a change the diurnal return of the sun makes, and were it not that the thing is usual and we are accustomed to it, that would be thought a strange matter. How vast is the change, that when darkness is upon the spacious hemisphere, all of a sudden the return of the sun should clothe all with so much light, and lustre, and glory, as we see it doth! Such vicissitudes the wisdom of God hath thought fit, but especially it hath been reckoned more suitable to his wisdom, to carry things on from obscurer and less considerable beginnings unto perfect and more glorious issues, so that in the evening it shall be light; all the foregoing day did look more like night than day. That we reckon a great work of wisdom to be able to find out a way of doing the most unexpected things, that no one

would have thought of, further than as it may please him to give any previous intimations of his purpose what he will do.

2. It is most suitable to that supreme interest which he hath in this lower world, that propriety and dominion which he claims in it to himself by a most rightful claim, to procure himself a more universal, actual acknowledgment and subjection than hitherto, whether we speak of his natural interest as he is the God and the Creator of the world, (this lower part, this inferior region is a part of his creation too,) or of his acquired interest by the Redeemer, and I more especially intend the latter. When I consider the magnificent things that the scripture speaks concerning the interest of the Redeemer in this world, this lapsed apostate world, such as this, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations," Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. Make men know that they belong to me, and are all my right; lay my claim to them, proclaim my right, challenge my interest for me, proselyte them to me, baptize them into my name with the Father's and the Holy Ghost's—this doth import as if some time or other he meant to have a more actual acknowledgment and subjection in this world than hitherto. If we look upon such a text as that, "He died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the living and the dead," Rom. xiv. 9. The living and the dead comprehend all that we can think of, and it signifies as much as that he might be the universal Lord of all. Having paid so dear a price, do we not think that he will make more of the purchase than hitherto he hath? As you have it pursued in that fourteenth chapter to the Romans, in

several expressions, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living," ver. 7. 9. That invitation to all the ends of the earth is of as strong import this way, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Isa. xlv. 22. Observe the solemnity and majesty of the following words, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear," ver. 23. Which saying is expressly applied to the Lord Christ by the apostle in Phil. ii. 11. Consider to the same purpose the solemnity of his inauguration, and the largeness of the grant made to him thereupon: "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion; I will declare the decree. Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Psalm ii. 6, 7. This day, that is, the resurrection day, that is the eminently intended sense, as the apostle's quoting of it, in Acts xiii. 33. plainly signifies; "This day have I begotten thee;" thou art now to me the firstborn to the dead, the first-begotten of them that slept; and, being my firstborn, art a great heir, and this is thy inheritance: "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," ver. 8. Surely that signifies more than mere right and title. And think how pursuant to that it is foretold, Rev. xi. 15. that upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the voice should be, the proclamation should go forth, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." They are "become" so; that must needs be in some other way than they could be

understood to be so before ; they were always so in right and title. It is very suitable to that supreme and sovereign interest that he hath at one time or other to assert his right ; especially considering it as a disputed right : for how long hath this interest been contested about by the usurping god of this world, “ the prince of the darkness of this world ! ” He who hath tyrannized in the dark, and made it so much his business to keep all men from knowing any other Lord !

3. It is most suitable unto the immense almighty “ power, by which he is able to subdue all things to himself.” It will be upon that account a Godlike work, worthy of such an agent. To make “ all mountains vanish before Zerubbabel,” Zech. iv. 7. to bring about what seemed so very difficult, and even unexpected to all men ; this is a thing becoming God, to do what no one else could do. It is the acknowledgment therefore that is given him as God, a glorifying him as God, which we find done by Jehoshaphat, “ We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee,” 2 Chron. xx. 12. That is as much as to confess that when all created power is at a nonplus, and can do no more, (we can do no more,) yet thou hast still somewhat to do, when there is nothing remaining to be done by any hand else. And it is very subsidiary in this case, and helpful to our apprehension and faith, to consider the immensity and omniscience of that Spirit, whereby this great work is to be done ; to think that that Spirit is already every where ; as in Psa. cxxxix. 7. “ Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ? and whither shall I flee from thy presence ? ” Whether I think of heaven or earth, or of any the remotest parts beyond the seas, there thy Spirit is.

He doth not need to go far in order to the doing of these great things; but only to exert a present influence where he is already, having all things subsisting in him, "living, moving, and having their being in him." And when we consider how great the efficacy is of that great apostate impure spirit, that in scripture uses to go under the name of Satan or the devil, to keep the world in darkness and ignorance, to hold them off from God; the course of the world is said to be "after the power of the prince of air, the spirit that worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2. When we think that his influence should be so diffused and extensive as that it is thought fit to be said, that the whole world lies *EN TO PONERO*, which is capable of being read, "in the evil one, in the wicked one," 1 John v. 19. How should faith triumph in the apprehension of the absolute immensity and omnipresence of that blessed Spirit, by which this great work is to be wrought, and done in the world? When, as we know, Satan cannot be every where, he makes use of many hands, many instruments; but this Spirit that works all in all immediately itself, how agreeable is it to it to be the author of such a work as this, the reviving of religion out of that dismal death that is so generally upon it in the world!

4. We cannot but apprehend it most suitable to the divine goodness, that boundless, flowing goodness; that, after the prince of darkness, the Apollyon, the destroyer of souls, hath been leading still his multitudes down to perdition from age to age, with so little check or restraint, a time should come, when in so visible a way the spoil should be rescued out of the hand of the terrible and the strong; and the

Son of God come in for his portion and share, that it was said should be divided to him, Isa. liii. 12. How like will such a dispensation as this be unto that first joyful sound of the gospel by the ministry of angels, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will toward men?" How agreeable to this will that be which we find in Rev. xxi. 3. When that voice shall be heard, concerning a thing then actually done and taking place, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and all tears shall be wiped away;" as it follows, ver. 4. Certainly it is very Godlike upon this account, that such a thing should be To reflect upon such passages of scripture; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. "After that the kindness and love of God to man appeared;" that philanthropy, and the large goodness which such expressions signify, methinks should prevent its being thought strange, that more large correspondent effects of such goodness are expected, before the end of all things shall come.

I must add here by way of caution, that it is true, it is not safe to conclude from what we conceive suitable to God to do, that such a thing shall certainly be done: a stress were not to be laid upon that kind of arguing, if we would suppose that argument to be the original and principal. But having other grounds to rely upon, which you have heard, it is very aptly subsidiary; and signifies very considerably as an addition, to have the apprehension of such a work as every way most suitable to God, and worthy of him. And when we find upon other grounds, that is, from what God hath expressly said

and foretold, that we have cause to receive and entertain such a truth ; we have reason to entertain it with a great deal more complacency, and to solace and satisfy ourselves in it the more, by how much the more we apprehend of suitableness and congruity and fitness in it, and how every way it becomes that great God who is to be the Author of this blessed work. We may venture after him to speak of what is suitable ; that is, when he hath told us what he will do, or when we have seen what he doth, then it is fit for us to say, This was very worthy of God, fit for him to do ; or it will be so, whenever he shall please to do it, if it be what we are yet expecting him from his word to do.

But if it be objected here—If in these several respects it be a thing suitable to God to do such a work as this, why was it not done long ago ? inasmuch as this was as good a reason at any other time as it can be in any time yet to come ; since God's wisdom, his sovereign dominion, his power and might, his grace and goodness, were always the same ?

To that I shall shortly say,

(1.) That if it be a thing very suitable to God to do, as we have represented, certainly it seems a great deal more likely, and a far more probable way of reasoning, from its not being done to expect that at some time or other it shall, than that it never shall. But we have told you we rely upon other grounds, and take in that consideration only as subsidiary and auxiliary, to facilitate our apprehension and belief of what God hath foretold in his word. But I add,

(2.) That there are but these two things that we can have to consider in this matter and to give an

account of; the delaying of such a work so long, and the doing it at last: and I doubt not but a very unexceptionable account may be given of both.

[1.] For the delaying of it so long. Truly we have reason enough to resolve that into that justice against which no one that ever considers can open his mouth in this case. Is it to be thought strange that God should so long withhold his light and influence from a world in so wilful an apostacy, and degeneracy, and rebellion through so many ages? that hath always taken care to propagate the enmity, and to keep on foot the rebellion, so as that always when he comes to look down upon the world, this is the prospect that he hath of it, this the account of things; looking down from heaven upon the children of men, he seeth that there is none that doeth good, none that understand and seek God, *Psa. liii. 1, 2.* Men affect distance from him, they please themselves to be without him in the world. Is it to be thought strange? is it not highly just that he should make that their long-continued doom, which had been their horrid choice? You affect to be without God! be so, in your own loved darkness and death! Men might see that things are not well with them, that they are in an unhappy state; it is visible. "*Ira Dei est vita mortalis,*" is an ancient saying—This mortal life is the very wrath of God. Men might apprehend that God is angry, that they are not such creatures as man was made at first: heathens have apprehended and spoken of the apostacy. But when they are miserable, and feel themselves so, yet they do not return to him and seek after him: they cannot help themselves to mend the temper of their own spirits, which they might easily discern is far out of course, yet they

do not cry for help. It is highly glorious triumphant justice to withhold so despised and neglected a presence and influence from so vile and wicked a generation. But then,

[2.] For doing such a thing at last notwithstanding, good account may be given also. Inasmuch as this cannot be said to be a thing to which justice most strictly and indispensably and perpetually obliges, but a thing which it doth highly approve; wisdom and sovereignty may most fitly interpose at pleasure, and when it shall be thought fit. God may let his action against the world fall when he will, though he have a most righteous one: and as the apostle speaks, Rom. xi. 22. concerning this case, the restitution of the Jews, which shall be unto the Gentiles also life from the dead, when all shall be gathered in at once; we are to expect instances in the mixed course of God's dispensation, both of his severity and goodness. And finally, when that time comes, when all Israel shall be saved, and the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in, the matter is to be resolved into such an exclamation as that which the apostle makes, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," ver. 33. It is to be referred unto his wisdom and sovereignty, to time things as seems good to him. "The times and seasons are hid in his own power," Acts i. 7. Hidden from us, but in his power to state, and settle, and determine when and as he pleases. What is more agreeable unto so absolute a sovereign and so wise a one, than such an arbitrary timing of the dispensation of grace, whenever it shall have its course?

And for our own part; as we have that reason to adore sovereign wisdom and goodness whenever

they shall have their exercise in this kind ; so in the mean time we have reason to be silent and our mouths to be stopped, while God doth as yet defer and delay the time of that pouring forth of his Spirit. We have reason to be silent, if it be our lot in our age to be under the restraints of that blessed Spirit. When was there ever any age in the world that might more fitly be pitched upon for the object, upon which justice should have its exercise in this kind ? Was there ever an age wherein the Spirit was more grieved, more striven against ? wherein God should have more cause and reason to say, “ My Spirit shall not strive with you ? ” With whomsoever of all mortals it strives, it shall not strive with you ! To cast our eyes abroad, and consider the state of the world ; and to look on the state of things at home. For the nations about us we have heard how they have been for years together ; what reformatations do we hear of ? what dispositions to return to God ? men cry because of the oppressions of the mighty ; but “ none says, Where is God our Maker ? ” Every where there is that disposition to groan and languish and die under their pressure ; but no inquiries after God : and whereas they cannot turn to him without him, (and we acknowledge that for a principle,) help in order thereto is not implored. We can feel what is externally afflictive ; the divine absence we feel not. When his soul is departed from us, we are not concerned to be without the Spirit : as, “ Lest my soul depart from thee,” Jer. vi. 8. He speaks of that presence of his as a soul to that people ; as it truly and really is to a people professing the name of God : his special presence is the soul of such a people, as they are such a people ; holds things together, keeps

up and maintains life and order. “Be instructed lest my soul be gone.” When his presence and Spirit retires and is withdrawn, it is as discernible in the state of things among a people, as a man can distinguish a carcase from a living man. God is gone, his soul is departed, the soul which he had put into such a people, which was active and at work amongst them. Well! but we are men still for all that; we are reasonable creatures, and have an apprehensive understanding of the word and faculties remaining to us; so that we might know that such a presence is gone, and we are miserable thereby; and there might, one would think, be some lamentings after the Lord: but where almost are they to be found? If we could have the world at will, enjoy what would gratify sensual inclination, God might be gone and keep away from us, and few would concern themselves with the matter. Have we anything then to say, that the season is deferred of pouring forth this Spirit? No. If we consider the resistance, and grievance, and vexation, that it hath met withal in our age and amongst us; it is not strange if God should determine, “My Spirit shall not strive with you;” whatever good thoughts I may have towards those who shall succeed and come up hereafter. But yet, notwithstanding, it is most suitable and congruous, that at one time or another so great a work as this, the recovery of religion from under so dismal a darkness and so great a death, should be done. And all these things together serve to evince that this means hath an efficacy, which we have reason to believe both can and will do this work, so as to make religion to prosper and flourish in the world sooner or later.

SERMON VIII.

PREACHED JUNE 26, 1678.

WE have shown at large the efficacy of the means assigned in the text, a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, for bringing about a happy state of things to the christian church; in one of those two things, that must be supposed to concur in making up such a happy state; namely,

First. For the revival of the power of religion. Without which the other branch, which we are further to consider, would signify very little to the good state of the church. But this being presupposed, we now proceed to show how efficacious a means the revival of religion and the prosperous flourishing state of that, by the Spirit poured forth, would be,

Second. For bringing about an externally happy state of things in the church of God. And it would be so,

I. By removing the causes of public calamities.

II. By working whatsoever doth positively tend unto public good.

I. By removing the causes of public calamities: both the deserving and the working causes.

1. What does deserve public calamities? What so far provokes divine displeasure, as to inflict

them, or to let them befall a people? Nothing doth this but sin; that only troubles a people, and causes an unhappy and unprosperous state of things, the hiding of God's face, as the text expresses it. It doth, as it were, cause an ireful aspect in the countenance of Providence; makes that otherwise shining, smiling face to be hidden and obscure, and clothes it with terror, that it is not to be beheld. "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you;" in the language of the text, Isa. lix. 1, 2. So it hath been threatened that it should be, and so in event it hath been, upon any of the more notable apostacies of the church of God. This hath constantly ensued, his hiding his face; that is, his altering the course of providence, so as that its aspect hath become ireful and terrible. It is foretold that so it should be upon such delinquencies. God says to Moses, "Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be amongst them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them," Deut. xxxi. 16. And what will come of that? "Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us?" ver. 17. And the like you have, chap. xxxii. 18, &c. "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that

formed thee. And when the Lord saw it he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be; for they are a very froward generation," &c. Such threatenings you find unto the christian churches too, in chap. ii. and iii. of the Revelation. There it is threatened to the churches of Ephesus, and Pergamos, and Sardis, and Laodicea; that inasmuch as there were such and such things, wherein they were notoriously delinquent; "If you do not repent, 'I will remove your candlestick,' Rev. ii. 5. If you do not repent, 'I will fight against you with the sword of my mouth,' ver. 16." That means no doubt the threatenings of the word made operative, and brought to execution: as in Hos. vi. 5. "I have hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth." "Except thou repent, 'I will come against thee as a thief,' Rev. iii. 3. And, 'Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Be zealous therefore and repent,' ver. 16. 19." And thus it hath also in event been according to the tenour of these threats. If you look over those psalms, which are the records of the carriage and deportment of God's own peculiar people towards him, and of his dealing with them thereupon; Psalms lxxviii. cv. and cvi. all hath but verified that one thing mentioned in Lev. xxvi. 23, 24. that when they should walk contrary unto him then would he also walk contrary unto them; that is, he hid his face, as you have heard the import of that expression. And it is with the same cloud that he doth as it were cover his face and them too. "He covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in

his anger," Lam. ii. 1. So he often did that people of the Jews. And so he hath the christian churches too in great displeasure : those seven in Asia, those in Greece, and in many other parts of the world that have been famous.

What is it now that must counterwork that wickedness, which provokes God thus to hide his face? we know his Spirit must do it: when he pours out his Spirit, he ceases to hide his face. That is, a quick refining fire purges the dross; without the purging of which the whole lump is called reprobate silver, rejected of the Lord. When the matter was consulted of, the blessed God is represented as it were disputing with himself, whether or not to abandon and disinherit his Israel. And when at length the contrary resolution is taken up, what do you find to be the concurrent resolution with that of not casting them off, and laying them aside? "I said, how shall I put thee among the children and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?" Jer. iii. 19. Thus the matter is resolved, as in a subserviency to the resolution not to cast them off; "Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from me." I will put a son-like disposition into thee, and so the relation shall be continued, and I will not disinherit thee. Thus the thoughts of that severity, of disinheriting and abandoning, came to be laid aside. But the Spirit poured forth removes also.

2. The working causes, as well as the provoking causes of such calamities to the church of God; both without and within itself.

(1.) Causes without the church itself; the injurious violence of open avowed enemies, the atheistical, infidel, idolatrous world; and all reducible

to that head, by which the church of God may be endangered. The effusion of the Spirit will remove this cause of public calamities, either,

[1.] By subduing such enemies, and breaking their power. And while God is among his people and hath not hid his face, they may venture to defy all the world. "Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us," Isa. viii. 9, 10. Our matters are in a good state; for we are not deserted and forsaken of the divine presence, our defence and our glory. How is all the enemies' power gloried over upon this account in Psa. xlv. and in many like places of scripture! in that time, when they shall generally "fear the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun;" then it is said, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him," Isa. lix. 19. that is, animate and fill up every part; so as that all that oppose, shall even melt away before him. Or,

[2.] They shall be overawed, so as thereby to be made to surcease and desist from attempts of hostility against the church. For the church when religion lives in it, (as you know that is to be the first effect of the Spirit to this purpose,) becomes "terrible as an army with banners;" as the expression is, Cant. vi. 4. Upon life, order will be sure to ensue, and with that goes majesty, and with that terror. There is an awful majesty, you know, sits in the face of a man, while he lives; but if he once become a carcase, the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, and even the very worms of the earth

dare prey upon him. So it is with the church; when it is dead, when religion is become a mere piece of empty, spiritless formality, this makes it look but just like other parts of the world; they will say of it, "What are they better than we?" The religion of christians, if you look only to the external formalities of it, hath not so much of a superiority or higher excellency, but that it will be a disregarded thing with those who can easily distinguish between vital religion and dead. But when the Spirit of the living God puts forth itself in discernible effects, and such as carry an awful aspect with them unto the common reason of men, religion then grows a venerable thing, and the very purpose of opposition and hostility is checked and countermanded, and even quite laid aside. Or else,

[3.] They become kindly affected by this means unto the church; to those who are seriously religious in the world, which we suppose to be, upon so general a pouring forth of the Spirit, a very common thing. Their hearts incline to favour, as we have noted upon another occasion before, that it is apt to be. When there are manifest appearances of God in the restoring of religion, it appears that the thing is of the Lord, the hand of Heaven is seen in it. When it was very remarkably so among the first converts, it is said, "They had favour with all the people," Acts ii. 47. Upon those manifest appearances of God on behalf of the Israelites under the Egyptian oppression, the Egyptians at length came to favour them. "The Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians," Exod. xi. 3. for they manifestly saw that God was for them. So natural a respect, from somewhat of a remaining fellow-feeling, the manifest appearance of anything

divine did of old draw from the reasonable nature of man! Yea,

[4.] They become sincerely proselyted very generally: that is to be supposed from the many scriptures formerly opened. And so the causes of offence and disturbance to the church from without very much cease, from the vast extension and spreading of its territories: they that were enemies to true christians on every side become even of themselves. That transforming power and influence, which religion and the Spirit of God poured forth will have upon the generality of the spirits of men, is the thing designedly held forth by such expressions as these: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den," Isa. xi. 6, &c. It is subjoined to all this, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," verse 9. Religion shall so diffuse itself, and the Spirit of God go forth with that transforming power, as to turn leopards, and lions, and beasts of prey into lambs; to make men of ravenous dispositions to become sincere christians. According to the influence and power of the Spirit of Christ, the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea, and so there shall be no hurting or destroying in all the holy mountain of the Lord. My design, as hath been often intimated, is more to show the con-

nexion of these things with one another, than to define the circumstances of the state itself, and when it shall be. In the same manner I conceive the expression is to be understood in Psalm xlv. 5. where, speaking of the prosperous state and progress of the kingdom of Christ, its great improvements, when he shall go on prosperously, conquering and to conquer, he saith; “Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king’s enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.” Thine arrows shall be directed even into their very hearts, and so they shall become subject unto thy rule by means of the impressions made upon their hearts.

(2.) Causes of trouble and calamity, within the church itself, will, by the same means, be made to cease too.

We are told what those causes are by the apostle James, chap. iv. 1. “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts?” Indeed this is the same cause that was before mentioned, but considered as disquieting and troubling the church of God in the world in another way of operation. The wickedness of the world may be considered, either with reference to the object of it, the great and blessed God, against whom all sin of whatsoever kind is ultimately directed; or with reference to the general subject of it, the world itself which lies in wickedness. According to the former notion of it, as it works in direct reference to God, it is the moral cause of calamities; it provokes God to inflict them, as hath been shown. But beside that, it is to be considered in the other notion, in reference to the subject: and so it hath an immediate malignant efficiency of its own to work public calamities.

Plain it is, that the covetousness, the pride, the

wrathfulness, the envy, the malice, that every where so much abound in the christian church, are the source of its wars, the things that disquiet it, and will not let it rest: and, which involves them all, self-love; a radical evil, from whence spring all the other, and consequently all the miseries, that do, or at any time have, infested the church of God in this world. It is the observation of a pagan, that a people's self-love is, as he calls it, the cause of all sins; that too earnest love that every one unduly bears to himself. And the apostle Paul, speaking of the perilous times that should be in the latter age of the world or the last times, (meaning by that phrase the later part of the age from the Messiah to the end of the world, according to the known division of time into three ages by the Jews,) signifies that the perilousness of those times should then principally appear, when there should be a more notorious discovery of that great principle of self-love every where in the world. Indeed that hath been a principle ruling the world, ever since the breaking off of man from God: yet we know there are some times of more prevailing wickedness in the world than others are: and this is the character of those perilous times of the last age, that "men should be lovers of their own selves, PHILAUTOI," 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2. Or, as the apostle Peter, speaking of the same latter times, expresses it, 2 Pet. ii. 10. men shall be AUTHADEIS, self-pleasers.

It is very obvious how all the other particular evils spring from this one root. What is pride but an overweening conceit of a man's self? too much complacency in, and admiration of one's self? What is covetousness but a labouring to grasp all to one's self? Envy rises because I see others

have the good things which I would fain have myself. When it fares better with a man than it doth with others, then he is proud ; when it fares better with others than it does with him, then he is envious. When he is proud upon the former account, that subdues him to the dominion of such other evils as have most affinity with that ; it makes him wrathful, malicious, revengeful, and the like. And these miseries, in respect whereof the last days are said to be perilous, are, by the apostles in the fore-mentioned places, referred unto self-love, self-pleasing, as the proper diagnostics* and characters of such a state of the world. But what kind of self-love is it ? or what kind of self is it the love of ? It is our most ignoble, meanest self, the basest part of ourselves ; the body, the sensitive life, and the good things that are suitable and subservient to that. This self is the great idol set up all the world over, and the undue love of it is the idolatry by which that idol is served : terrene and earthly good, in the several kinds and sorts of it, are the several sorts of sacrifices by which that idol is, from time to time, provided for. This being the true state of the case, as wickedness doth more prevail and abound, there is still the higher contestation between idol and idol ; so many men, so many idols ; and so many altars set up for each several idol. And this makes all the hurry and commotion in each part and corner, every man labouring to grasp as much as he can to the service of his own idol, his own private and particular interest. This hath drawn that inundation of miseries upon the church of God ; the wickedness of men hath thus broke out like a flood.

* A symptom by which one disease is distinguished from another

The floods of ungodly men, actuated by such principles, and by that one principle as radical to all the rest, have overwhelmed the world and the church with miseries.

And where is the cure? Only the Spirit of the Lord lifting up a standard against these floods; and that by turning men from transgression in Zion, Isa. lix. 19, 20. by counterworking that wickedness which hath prevailed so far and to so high a degree. The Spirit of the living God only can purge and compose at once the troubled state of things. Wickedness can never admit any such thing as quiet. "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isa. lvii. 20, 21. They can neither admit it themselves, nor permit it to others. Now here the great purifier must be the Spirit poured forth; spoken of under the metaphorical expressions of a refiner's fire, and a fuller's soap, Mal. iii. 2. That is a quick and fervent fire, and will certainly make away with the dross and wickedness, when once it comes to pour forth its mighty and fervent influences to that blessed purpose; even though there should be a state of things, as is foretold in Zech. xiii. 8, 9. when two [third] parts of the land should be cut off and die, and only a third be left: that shall be refined as silver is refined, and tried as gold is tried. It is but one and the same labour, that gives purity and peace. The same thing that defiles, disturbs: and the same thing that purges, pacifies, and brings all to a quiet state and happy composure. So the Spirit poured forth will be a most efficacious means to bring about a good state, by removing the causes of public miseries. And also,

II. By working whatsoever hath a positive tendency to the good and happiness of the church. To evidence this I shall speak, 1. Of the principles which it doth implant ; and, 2. Of the effects which it works by those implanted principles, tending to the common prosperity of the whole church.

1. The principles which it doth implant. We may comprehend them all summarily under the name of the divine image, which it is the great business of the Spirit to restore among men. And I shall particularize no lower than to these two heads, divine light, and love ; which the Spirit of God poured forth settles and plants in the minds of men. These are the two great things wherein men are capable of imitating God. By one of the penmen of holy writ, the apostle St. John, in one and the same epistle, God is said to be both light and love. “ God is light,” 1 John i. 5. “ God is love,” chap. iv. 16. These made somewhat generally to obtain amongst men, cannot but infer a most happy state.

(1.) Light. When this is diffused, when the knowledge of God comes to cover the earth, (as was said,) as the waters do the sea, it cannot but make a happy, peaceful state. There is nothing terrible in light. “ A sphere of light (as I remember a heathen speaks) hath nothing in it that can be disquietive ; and therefore therein can be nothing but perfect tranquillity.” Wherever men are quarrelling with one another they are quarrelling in the dark, scuffling and fighting with one another in the dark ; though every man thinks he sees, which makes the matter so much the worse. It is a real but an unimagined, unapprehended darkness, that overspreads the world ; and in that darkness

men are working all the mischiefs and miseries to themselves that can be thought of. There will be an end to that when the divine light comes and spreads itself, as it were, in men's lives.

(2.) Love. When God implants his love in the minds of men, there needs no more. Even that one thing is enough to make a happy world, the love of God dwelling in all breasts, transforming them into love. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16. A most certain assurance that all will be well. And I would speak of these three branches of divine love, (for it is all divine in respect of the root and principle,) as conducing to make the world happy: Supreme love to God; a due and well regulated love of every man to himself, and love to every other man as to himself. But of these hereafter.

I shall now close with a short word of use. By the drift and tenour of what hath been hitherto discoursed, you may see; that the good and felicity of every person, and so of the church in common, though it come at last in the issue to be an internal thing, yet in the root and principle is an external thing. Every man's happiness or misery grows within himself; and so the common happiness and misery of the church of God grows principally and chiefly within itself. It is the saying of a heathen, Epictetus I mean, "The character or note of an idiot or plebeian is this, that he places the expectation of all his good or of all his evil from without; whereas the note, the certain character of a philosopher, (of a wise or virtuous man, so he means by that term,) is to place all his expectation of good or evil in things that are within himself." It were well if we could but learn this document from a

heathen, and learn it well, so as to have the sense of it deeply infixed in our minds and hearts. That hearing of these several causes that work the calamities and troubles of the church of God, we would consider, that according to our participation in any such calamities, these evils in ourselves do contribute a great deal more to them than the evils in any other men. Let us be convinced of this. Do but apprehend, that if the ambition, or pride, or covetousness, or malice of another man may hurt me, these things within myself do hurt me much more; and there is some spice or other of them in each of our natures. Why should not we be convinced of so plain a thing? Is not a dart in my own breast worse than in an enemy's hand? If I think myself concerned to know what the pride and covetousness, and malice and ambition of such and such a man may do against me; if I have any tincture of these evils (as who dares say he hath not?) within my own soul; have not I a nearer thing to regret, than the evil that only lies in another man? To expect or fear all our hurt from without, and not to fear the next and nearest evil, is the greatest stupidity imaginable.

And then for the causes of common good, and so of our own, as that is involved. We hear, it may be, with a great deal of complacency of such principles generally implanted in the minds of men. What glorious times would they be, if all other men were such lovers of God, such orderly lovers of themselves, and such lovers of their neighbours, as they should be! but is it not of a great deal more concernment to our own felicity, that we be so ourselves? Can the goodness, the piety, the righteousness, the benignity of other men do me good,

in comparison of what these things lodged and deeply rooted in my own soul would do? It is true, it were a most desirable thing to have all the world religious; but if all the rest of the world were so, and my own soul vacant of it, what should I be the better for that? If all other men were lovers of their own souls, it would be happy for them; but nothing to me, if I despised my own. Therefore let us learn what our own present business must be; to labour to have the causes of common calamity wrought out from ourselves, and the causes of common felicity and prosperity inwrought into ourselves. We cannot tell how to mend the state and condition of the world; and our duty reaches not so far: but we have each of us a work to do at home, in our own bosoms. And if ever we expect to see good days, it must be in this way, by being good and doing good, Psa. xxxiv. 12. 14.

SERMON IX.

PREACHED AUGUST 28, 1678.

WE are considering the principles, which the Spirit poured forth doth implant, conducive to the general prosperity and felicity of the people of God. And, as was said before, of the evil and mischievous principles, that naturally work their calamity and misery, that they may be all reduced to an inor-

dinate self-love ; so the good principles which have a tendency to their welfare, may all be referred unto one common head, that of a due and well-tempered, well-proportioned love. When the Spirit of God comes to make a good and happy state of things to obtain and take place in the church ; the work of that Spirit poured forth for this purpose, is to write the laws of God in the hearts of his people. So you may find, where there is a manifest reference to that future happy state promised, and which we are yet expecting and waiting for ; he speaks in that and in parallel scriptures of giving his Spirit, and of its immediate workings and operations. And this is its general work, to write his law in the hearts of his people, Jer. xxxi. 33. Now the law, we are told, all the law is fulfilled in that one word, Love, Gal. v. 14. That is the sum and epitome of the whole law. And if we descend a little more to particulars, these three branches of a holy, gracious love will do the whole business : that is,

I. That love to God which he requires and claims.

II. That love of particular persons, each of them to themselves, which is due and regular.

III. Their love to other men, as to themselves ; or measured by that love which they duly bear to themselves.

I. Consider what the love of God is according as the law requires ; and that we must therefore believe will be when God pours forth his Spirit generally, and by it writes his law upon the hearts of men. Here is the first and great thing in the law, as our Lord Jesus Christ himself gives us the system of it, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” Matt. xxii. 37, 38. “What doth the Lord thy God

require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God," "and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?" Deut. x. 12. Do but consider what this would do to make a happy world or a happy church, to have the love of God exalted into its just dominion and supremacy in the minds and souls of men ; that is, suppose a universal agreement among men to love God with one consent, with all their minds, and with all their souls, and with all their strength, as far as the bounds of the church may be set. There must be considerable, in this love to God, 1. Zeal for his interest and honour ; and, 2. Desire of happiness in him. One is love to him, as our supreme and sovereign Lord ; the other love to him, as our supreme and sovereign good, our portion, and felicity. Now,

1. Do but suppose a general agreement amongst us in the former of these, that entire devotedness unto the interest of God, which his love doth most certainly include and must possess the hearts of men with ; what an influence must this have ! When there shall be no other contention amongst men than who can do most for God, who can most greaten him in the world ; when men shall generally agree in an entire devotedness unto the sovereign supreme interest of the Lord of heaven and earth ; do not you think that would do much of this happy business ? for what cause of contention can there be amongst men then ? there are no quarrels in heaven, where that is the entire business of all, the thing wherein all consent and agree to praise and honour, to adore and glorify their common Ruler and Lord. And so far as the happy state we are speaking of shall obtain in the church of God on earth, so far

that will be the very image of the church of God in heaven. Where there is an agreement among persons upon an evil principle, do but consider how it compacts such people amongst themselves. See how united the people of Ephesus were in a false religion! As is noted by that orator, who bespoke them on occasion of the commotion amongst them upon the apostle Paul's coming thither, in Acts xix. 35. "What man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?" It was, it seems, a most observable unanimity that was amongst this people in this one thing unto that degree, that the whole city is said to be but one worshipper. Now when the church shall come to be but one worshipper of the great God, all devoted to him to serve his interest, when there shall be but one altar, the many altars mentioned before being all overturned by that inundation of the Spirit poured forth, and now but one great interest to be served; must not this make a happy state of things so far as it obtains? It is the multiplicity and privateness of men's designs and ends, that sets all the world together by the ears, and makes men every where ready to tear one another in pieces. Whether they go under the christian name or not, that makes no difference in the case, as certainly a wolf is never a whit the less a wolf for being clothed with a sheep's skin. But when persons shall become one, consenting and agreeing by the influence of that great principle of divine love in the main design and business of religion, this must produce a happy harmony. It is a very plain case, that if you draw a circumferential line, and place one centre within that circumference,

you may draw as many straight, direct lines as you will from any part of the circumference to that centre, and it is impossible you should ever make them to intersect or interfere with one another ; but let there be several centres, and then you cannot draw lines from any part, but they must necessarily intersect and cross one another ever and anon. Here is the case before us. It is the making of many centres that causes men to interfere, while every man makes his ownself his end ; no two men's interests can throughout and always agree, but that which this or that man does to please and serve himself, disserves or displeases somebody else, and hereupon comes a quarrel. It is manifest that sincere religion would cure all this ; when there is but one end, and every man's business is to serve and glorify their common Maker and Lord ; when all thus agree in the love of God, there would be no interfering, and how would that contribute to external prosperity !

2. Do but consider the other thing which true love to God includes, that is, the desire of him as our portion, our best and supreme good ; if that shall once come to be universal, (as it shall be whenever the happy time comes, when the Spirit shall generally write the law of God in the hearts of men,) it must needs make stirs, and contentions, and troubles to cease from amongst men so far as it doth obtain. For, as was intimated before, where self-love is the ruling principle, self the great idol, and something or other of terrene good the sacrifice wherewith this idol is to be served ; so the business of every man is to grasp in all that he can of the good things of this earth for himself. Now terrene good is (as our bodily part itself is, unto which it is

most adapted and suited) of such a nature that it cannot be severed and divided into parts without being diminished and lessened in the several parts ; it is not partible without diminution, so that the more one enjoys of it, the less every one else enjoys. But now, when the blessed God himself is the best good to every one, every one enjoys his share without the diminution of other's share. It is from the limitedness and unpartibleness of terrene good, without the lessening of the several parts, that it comes to be the object or occasion, about which, or upon account whereof, there is so much exercise of concupiscence, inordinate desire, envy, malice, every one labouring to catch from another, as thinking another's portion to be more than comes to his share, and his own less than should come to his. There is the occasion, and the corrupt nature of man is apt to take occasion from anything, for stirring the lusts and passions I am speaking of in reference to earthly good. But there is no occasion at all for the exercise of any such disquieting passions here, when there is a common agreement to make God their portion, to esteem him so with the Psalmist, " Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." When this comes to be the common sense with men, no man's share is diminished by the greater and larger enjoyments of another. And therefore you do not find that there is wont to be any exercise of disquieting passions in this case. Did you ever know any man that entertained malice against another because he himself desired to have very much of God, and he thought the other enjoyed more ? There is no place or pretence at all for any such thing, because, let another have ever so

much, there is enough in the same Fountain for him and for me too.

II. Consider what love towards a man's self is in the due kind and degree of it, and how that, when it shall come to obtain generally amongst men, must make towards the good and happy state of the church. That due and just love of a man's self will have its exercise in these two things; 1. A strict care of his mind and inner man; and, 2. A due care also of the body or outward man.

1. A very strict care of the mind and inner man. I remember a heathen, speaking of self-love, saith, "It is true, indeed, that every man ought to have a love to himself; there is a self-love that is divine, which God makes him to bear to himself." And by how much the more a man is a lover of himself with that kind of love, so much the less is he apt to disquiet other men, or to contribute anything to common miseries. Now he that loves himself duly and aright, will principally, and in the first place, love his own soul; he will labour to cultivate that to fit it for God, for his service and enjoyment; and about soul concernments men's interests do not differ. Will you but suppose men thus employed and busied, intently taken up about their own eternal felicity and the present forming of their spirits in order thereto; such will not have leisure to give trouble to other men. They that are all busy about this great affair, to take care of their own spirits, to keep their hearts with all diligence, to depress whatsoever may be troublesome to themselves or offensive to God within them, to improve and adorn their souls, to fit them for, and render them capable of a blessed eternity, you may be sure will find very little leisure to concern themselves

with the affairs of the world to the trouble and disquiet of that; though, if they can be any way serviceable, they will be most earnest and ready to do that, from the same temper and disposition of spirit. They are the most troublesome people every where, that do least mind their own souls, and have least business to do at home.

2. A due care of the body also is included in regular self-love. And that would signify not a little to a happy time; that is, if there were that care commonly taken of the outward man, and of what doth more immediately influence that, the appetites and affections and passions of the lower soul, wherein the true notion of temperance consists, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 23. If men could generally keep the flesh and its inordinate cravings under a government, so that it shall not be gratified in every thing that it would, nor sensual inclinations be suffered to grow into exorbitancies; if all those things that need to be corrected and reduced to order by sumptuary laws were so reduced by a living law in every man's own self, if men were generally become, by inward inclination, chaste, sober, willing to content themselves with what is useful for the ends and purposes of nature, without making provision for the flesh and its lusts, to satisfy and content them, not addicting themselves to eat or drink more than is necessary, or to idleness, and sloth, and other pieces of indulgence to the flesh; there would be connected with such things as these contentedness in every man's mind, (for lust is more costly than nature, covets more, and must have more,) and hereupon necessarily a great deal of tranquillity and peace. For while men's minds are contented within themselves, they are very little apt

to give discontent to others. But persons discontented themselves, restless, and full of trouble, (which they are only by their lusts,) are fit instruments then to give all the world trouble so far as their power can go. Nor would it be a small ingredient in the common external happiness of such a time, that by this means there would be a more general healthiness of body among people. If that great fruit of the Spirit, temperance, did commonly obtain, by which we are able each one to "possess his vessel," his own body, "in sanctification and honour," 1 Thess. iv. 4. to attend his own body even as the temple of the Holy Ghost, then there would not be that general cause of complaint concerning consuming and loathsome sicknesses that are, the great calamity of the age, and owing so manifestly in a high degree to unbridled lust. In that happy state of the church of God, wherein it is said, that the inhabitants of Zion shall not say they are sick, shall have no more cause to complain of sickness, because they "shall be forgiven their iniquity," Isa. xxxiii. 24. I reckon that forgiveness of sin hath a reference to that happy state of things, not only as it puts a stop to the inundations of divine judgments in other kinds, but also as it hath a direct tendency to keep off the evil mentioned; that is, when sin is forgiven, the power of it is broken at the same time; God doth never forgive sin and leave it reigning, but he forgives and breaks the power of it at once. Now, as when sin is not forgiven, men are left to the swing and impetus of their own lusts, and so are the executioners of God's vengeance upon themselves; so when sin is forgiven, it languishes and dies; such a people grow more pure, holy, temperate, chaste, sober in

all their conversation ; and so there comes to be less appearance of sickness and ails, and those calamities with which men naturally afflict their own flesh by the indulgence of their lusts. So that by the Spirit poured forth, and so a principle of due love to a man's self being once implanted, and excited, and kept in due exercise, it must infer generally both more contented minds and more healthful bodies ; and these things cannot but signify a great deal to make a very good time.

There is a third branch of love, that must obtain, when God comes to write his law in the hearts of men by his Spirit—love as it respects other men. But of this hereafter.

By what hath been said, it seems a plain case that the Spirit of God poured forth would make a very happy external state of things. And since it is so proper and direct a means, and would be so efficacious were it poured forth, truly it cannot but be matter of very sad reflection that the thing should not be done ; that there should be so great, so dreadful a restraint of this blessed Spirit in our time and age, as we have cause to observe and complain of. It is matter of sad reflection, if you consider what, as an effect, it carries the signification of ; and also what further mournful effects it carries a presignification of, as a cause.

(1.) Consider what an evil it carries in it the signification of, as an effect. The principle of such a restraint must needs be a very great degree of divine displeasure. It is the highest expression of such displeasure that we can think of, and the most dreadful piece of vengeance, when God saith ; “ Now because men have offended me at so high a rate, I will take away my Spirit from them.” This was the

act of vengeance wherewith he punished the provocations of the old world, when "the wickedness of man was great in the earth," and the imagination of his heart was all evil, and that continually: Well! saith he, "my Spirit shall no more strive with man," Gen. vi. 3. 5. I have done, my Spirit shall strive no more. It signifies the displeasure to be so much the greater, by how much the easier such a happy work as this might be wrought and brought about amongst us. It is no more but to let his Spirit breathe; and all our troubles, and all the causes of them must vanish at once. No, but saith God, my Spirit shall not breathe, shall not strive. The event speaks the determination and purpose: it doth not breathe or strive:—are we so stupid as not to observe that? is there that spirit of love, of prayer, and supplication stirring, as hath been wont? It is very terrible to think that there should be such a restraint of that blessed Spirit, upon account of the signification made by it of divine displeasure.

(2.) Consider the presignification it also carries with it of most dreadful effects to ensue, when in displeasure his Spirit retires and is gone. The not pouring forth of the Spirit signifies, that wrath must be poured forth. When the Spirit is restrained, wrath shall not be restrained long. The pouring forth of the Spirit and of wrath do, as it were, keep turns; there is an alternation between them. When the Spirit is not poured forth, then there is blindness, hardness, an eye that cannot see, an ear that cannot hear, and a heart that cannot understand; as you have them joined in Isaiah vi. 10. And how long must this continue? "Lord, how long?" saith the prophet there, verse 11. It follows, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses

without man." That is the answer given. And therefore methinks we should be all in a kind of trembling expectation, while the matter is so manifest that this blessed Spirit is under restraint. What doth it signify but a purpose and determination of the offended majesty of the blessed God? Let the lusts of men have their swing, let them rend and tear one another by the violent agitations and hurries of their own furious lusts. He hides his face all the while. "I will hide my face," saith he, "I will see what their end shall be," Deut. xxxii. 20. It is not difficult to apprehend what will come of them when once I give them up and leave them to themselves: then there need no other hands to be armed against them but their own; they will soon be self-destroyers. each man would be so to himself, if given up to the furious hurry and impetus of indwelling lust. Certainly we have reason to conclude, that this age hath highly displeased the Lord, that his Spirit is so much withdrawn, that could so easily work a cure: but yet he will not, he thinks fit to express resentment by holding under restraint that Spirit that could rectify and set all right, and make us a very happy people in a moment.

SERMON X

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 4, 1678.

WE are yet speaking of the tendency of that radical principle of love to make an external happy state of things, which we are to expect the Spirit when poured forth to implant. We have spoken of love to God, and of regular self-love; and of the influence which these severally must have towards a prosperous state.

III. Consider what love to other men, as to themselves, would do in this matter. This supposes that second branch we have been insisting on, a due love to ourselves, as not only allowed but enjoined us; when it is made the measure of the love we are to bear and exercise toward other men. And therefore, as being a deeper and more fundamental law of nature, that must be supposed to be more excellent and noble in its own kind. That which is most perfect in its own species is the measure of the rest. But the Spirit, whose work and business it is to write the laws of God in the hearts of men, when he shall be poured forth, will write this also, that they love other men as they ought to love themselves: especially in the latter days, the times which our discourse refers to. Because so great a part of that law is wrapped up in this love; therefore it cannot but be that in those latter days, when God

doth design to reform and new-mould things, the felicity and happy state of things shall be brought about very much by the mediation and interveniency of this love and the influence thereof. And because this love hath a most direct influence this way, I have designed the more to enlarge upon it; and shall speak of it according to that double reference which our subject obliges us to consider; that is, its reference to God and his Spirit as the author of it; and its reference unto a happy state of things, as that which is to be brought about by it: its reference upwards to God, and downwards to the world. Which two considered together will amount to thus much; that by God's working of this love more generally amongst men, that happy and blessed issue that we are speaking of is to be accomplished.

1. Consider we its reference to God and to his Spirit, which we are necessarily to consider; otherwise the pouring forth of the Spirit would not include it. And it is requisite we should insist upon this, inasmuch as such love is too commonly meanly thought of. It were well, if there were not cause to say, that too generally professors of religion at a higher and stricter rate had not too low an opinion of this love in the scripture-regulation of it, the loving of others as ourselves, the measure unto which it is to be adjusted. And true it is indeed, that they who know no more of this matter than only the mere sound of the words, they into whose heart the thing never entered, and with whom it never yet became a vital, living law, will think it but a mean thing. It looks in such persons' eyes, while it is only clothed with a verbal representation and no more, as a meanly habited person at their doors, whom they guess at only by his garb: and if

such a one should have meanness objected to him only from thence, and the case will admit it, it is but a doing himself right to speak of his parentage, and tell how nobly he is descended. And so much are we to do on the behalf of this love, to let you know it is a heaven-born thing, descended of God, that owes itself to heaven: it is of no lower and meaner extraction than so. Do not think I mean by it that common carnal love which wicked men as such may bear one to another; which is a more mean and less innocent love, than that which birds and beasts have to those of their own kind: but I mean that love, whereby any are enabled to love men as men, and holy men as holy men in God, and for God's sake, and upon his account. This is a heavenly, divine thing, the product of the blessed eternal Spirit of God alone. For evincing of that, weigh these several considerations, which the scriptures do plainly and plentifully afford us.

(1.) That even this love is called the love of God. So it is most plainly in 1 John iii. 17. "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him?" So noble and sublime a thing is not to be more meanly spoken of, it is to be called the love of God: no title inferior to that is suitable to it.

(2.) That God is called the God of this love; "Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you," 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

(3.) It is expressly said to be of God, and men upon the account of this love to be born of God. So in 1 John iv. 7, 8. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love (this love plainly) is of God;

and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God ;” is acquainted with God, intimate and inward with God ; as a man’s own children would be with him, that are born of him, in whom his own nature is. Whereupon, on the other hand, they are spoken of as mere strangers to God, such as have nothing to do with him nor he with them, that are destitute of this love ; “ He that loveth not, knoweth not God ; for God is love.” And again,

(4.) That it is plainly made a character of the elect of God, distinguishing and severing of them from the refuse world ; “ Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness,” &c. Col. iii. 12. intimating plainly to us, that wheresoever God doth place his own love, there he doth impress and beget this love.

(5.) It is placed amongst the fruits of the Spirit, and even in the front of them ; “ The fruit of the Spirit is love,” Gal. v. 22. in opposition to the hatred, wrath, strife, &c. mentioned in the foregoing verses as the “ works of the flesh.” And we are told in Eph. v. 9. that “ the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.” “ In all goodness.” It is the proper work of the Spirit upon the spirits of men to fill them with goodness, propensions and inclinations to do good ; and so to beget in them that love, which must be the spring of all such doing of good.

(6.) Walking in the Spirit is directed with a special eye and reference unto the exercise of this love ; as you may see in Gal. v. the 14th, 15th, and 16th verses compared together ; “ All the law is fulfilled in one word,” he means the whole law of the second table, “ even in this, Thou shalt love

thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another," the opposite to this love, or that which follows upon the want of it, or from the opposite principle, "take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, (observe the inference,) Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." To walk in the Spirit is to walk in the exercise of this love.

(7.) It is spoken of as a peculiar, inseparable concomitant of that light which is from God and the Spirit of God, and made and transmitted by the gospel. Observe to this purpose, 1 John ii. 7, &c. "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word, which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." A new commandment this is, and not new: not new, in respect of the substance of it; for so it is one of the ancient, substantial, fundamental, great laws of nature; and wheresoever the revelation of God's mind and will is to be found, that is and was ever to be found: but new, in respect to that more glorious way of recommendation which it now hath in and by the gospel and the Spirit of Christ; which wheresoever it comes to obtain, in what soul soever, transforms

that soul into a heavenly region, a region of calm, and mild, and benign, and holy light. In that light dwells this love, amidst that light; as the contrary, hatred, is a fiend that lives and lurks in darkness, and can dwell nowhere else. They that are destitute of this principle have darkness for their region; they can dwell nowhere but in malignant, disconsolate darkness; there they wander as forlorn, bewildered creatures. The apostle Peter having spoken of this love under several names, brotherly-kindness, charity, and other expressions that are congenerous,* tells us in 2 Pet. i. 9. that "he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

(8.) It closely adheres unto that principle of life, which is begotten in all the children of God, when they become his children. The begetting of souls unto God, is certainly the implanting in them and deriving to them a principle of divine life. With that principle this love is complicated, or it is a part of that very principle; so as that by it the children of God and the children of the devil are distinguished from one another. He that hath this principle, hath passed from death to life, is in a state of life: as you may find by comparing together several verses of 1 John iii. "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, (therefore he is of the devil,) neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil,

* Of the same kind.

and his brother's righteous," ver. 10—12. And, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death," ver. 14. hath no participation of that vital principle. He "is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," ver. 15. None that is apt to destroy the life of another, can be supposed to have a principle of divine life in himself, the beginning of eternal life. So that, divide the world into two seeds, and they are God's and the devil's. Those who are God's live the life of God; have a life derived and communicated to them from God, wherein this same love is a part: and they that are destitute of it are all to be reckoned to the other seed; they belong to the devil's kingdom; for to be destitute of this implies a being possessed with the contrary principle; no man's soul can be neutral in this case. But as to all such good principles, as are due unto the original rectitude of man and his nature as originally right; if these be wanting they are privatively wanting, and are excluded by the opposite principles obtaining and having place in their room and stead. The soul of man had that and such principles as are duly belonging to him; it cannot be *rasa tabula*;* but if the true and proper impression be not there, there is another impression and not none.

And therefore it is consequent in the next place, that this love must needs be a great part of the divine image and nature, which is to be found in all that appertain to God.

All these things taken together do sufficiently

* A blank tablet; or, as the same meaning is familiarly expressed, a sheet of white paper.

entitle the Spirit of God to it, as the great author and parent of it. And that being once plain and clear,

2. We may consider the other reference of this love, its reference downwards towards the world. And it cannot but be consequent that wheresoever the Spirit poured forth doth work, it must needs work a very happy state of things, and would make this world a very pleasant region. For what! would it not make, think you, very happy days indeed to have men generally made like God, transformed into the divine image? God is love; and he that loves bears his image: he whose soul is under the dominion of such a love, is a true living representation of all the goodness, and benignity, and sweetness of God's own blessed nature: and would it not make a happy state, if men were generally made such? so to bear themselves to one another, so to converse and walk together, as holding forth the image of God, according to the dictates of a nature received from God, a divine nature put into them? But for the particular proof of this, it will appear by considering the proper, natural, genuine workings of such love, being itself once inwrought. Consider to that purpose, what it would exclude, and what it would beget.

(1.) What it would exclude.

[1.] It would exclude all hard thoughts amongst men concerning one another. "Love thinketh no evil;" as one of the characters of it is in 1 Cor. xiii. 5. Further than necessity and irrefragable evidence doth impose, it would not take up so much as an ill thought of any one. It is full of candour and ingenuousness, and apt to make the best construction of every word and action, and takes every thing

in the best sense that is capable of being put upon it. And what a spring of mischief and misery in the world would be shut up, dried up, if that proneness to hard, harsh, and frequently unjust thoughts, were by the workings of such a Spirit of love, erased out of the minds and hearts of men!

[2.] It would exclude every thing of pride and insolence towards others, vying with them, envying them, which proceeds from pride; "Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up," 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

[3.] It would exclude selfish designs. And with what tragedies and desolations do they fill the world! "Love seeketh not her own things," 1 Cor. xiii. 5. The exhortation is, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," Phil. ii. 4. Indeed it comes from that pride mentioned before, that men think all belongs to them, and if they can grasp ever so much, it is no more than their due. And therefore we have these things so conjoined in the place just mentioned; "Each esteeming other better than themselves, and, not seeking his own things, but also the things of others," ver. 3, 4.

Men are so much intent upon seeking their own things, are all for themselves; because every man is apt to esteem himself before all other men. But when we come to esteem others better than ourselves, I am worthy of nothing, any mean thing is good enough for me; then pride and selfishness are both excluded together by love.

[4.] It excludes all aptness to injure another; "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour," Rom. xiii. 10. Love so measured, whereby I love my neighbour even as myself, and whence therefore it comes to pass that I would no more hurt him than I would

myself, and would no more cheat him than I would myself, no more oppress and crush him than I would myself; would not this make a happy world, do we think? "The fruit of the Spirit is in all righteousness," Eph. v. 9.

[5.] As it would by these means exclude all aptness to offend others; so it would exclude a proneness to receive offence; and so make greatly to the quiet of the world. A good man, one himself full of love and goodness, is very little prone to take offence. As a heathen philosopher said concerning such a one; "A good man neither doth injure, nor is apt to resent an injury." So another discourses largely to show that injury doth not fall, doth not enter and sink (he means) into the mind and soul of a good, a wise, and virtuous man. This love excludes a captious disposition, apt to take offence at every thing, and to pick quarrels upon any or upon no occasion. What happy families would there be, what happy neighbours, when such a disposition should be excluded and banished by the over-ruling power of a spirit of love! There would be no factions in families, no parties, no maligning of one another; which commonly have their rise from an aptness to snarl at any thing that goes cross.

(2.) What it would beget.

[1.] It would beget mutual trust and confidence among ^{the}men and christians in one another, which makes not a little unto the common welfare. How sad is the case, when a man still continually converses with them whom he cannot trust, and they cannot trust him! A mutual confidence and trust in one another is fundamental to all society, to the good and prosperity of it. The apostle desires to

be "delivered from unreasonable and wicked men that have no faith," 2 Thess. iii. 2. It is probable he means that have not trustiness, faith in the passive sense; that are unconvertible men, such in whom we can place no faith. It is a dreadful thing to live in such a world or age, when a man must perpetually stand upon his guard, be so very cautious in all his converses, and words, and actions; I don't know whom to trust, whom to deal with. When this Spirit of love shall have to do more in the world, as men are generally made more sincere and good, so they shall generally be more trusted. Jealousy, and suspicion, and mistrust, and misgiving thoughts concerning one another are gone, and they are secure concerning one another, as no more suspecting that such a man hath an ill design upon me than I have upon myself.

[2.] It would produce mutual pity. That would be a good world when every man feels for another's condition even as his own, and "weeps with them that weep" as well as "rejoices with them that do rejoice," Rom. xii. 15.

[3.] It would produce a promptitude to do one another good upon all occasions. Such a love by the Spirit poured forth coming commonly to obtain, will make men disposed to do good as opportunity occurs; "As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10.

[4.] It will beget a delight in one another's welfare, a well-pleasedness in the prosperity of others that all things go well with them.

[5.] It will introduce mutual converse, solace, and delight in one another's society. When a man shall see the face of his friend or neighbour as the

face of an angel of God, he full of love and the other full of love, nothing but goodness flowing and reflowing; this will surely make a good time, when the Spirit of God poured forth shall generally influence the spirits of men unto such a temper.

This must needs make a very happy state of things, make the church on earth the very emblem of the church in heaven, as the truth and sincerity of religion and godliness is not another thing from the felicity and blessedness of heaven in the nature and kind. It is the same church that hath the primordials * of blessedness here, and the perfection of it hereafter. This is one great part of that great blessedness, when all are inclined by the operation of that Spirit, whose fruit is in all goodness, to seek, and desire, and rejoice in the good of one another, as they would do for their own.

We can now easily frame to ourselves the idea of a very happy time, and we ought to believe that the Spirit of God can work all that we can think, and a great deal more, when his own time and pleasure is. What hath been suggested must produce tranquillity in every man's own spirit, which will infer common tranquillity. They that have themselves unquiet, disturbed spirits are the great troublers of the world. Therefore the devil works all that mischief to mankind, because he is himself a restless creature, going up and down seeking a rest but finding none. Men will be at rest in their own spirits when they come to be under the possession and dominion of such a Spirit as we have spoken of.

* The originals, existing from the beginning.

SERMON XI.

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 18, 1678.

WE have been evincing the efficacy and sufficiency of an effusion of the blessed Spirit, such as we hope for in the latter times, to produce not only a prosperous state of religion, but also an external peaceful state of the church in consequence of the other; and this last, not only by removing the causes of general calamities, but by working likewise whatever hath a positive tendency to public good. Upon this head it was proposed to consider, 1. The principles which the Spirit poured forth is supposed to implant. These have been distinctly considered. And we now proceed to consider, 2. The effects, which the Spirit works by those implanted principles tending to the common prosperity of the whole church. They may be reduced to these two, union and order; which will both of them promote very happy times for the church of God.

I. Union amongst christians is one of those great effects which are to be wrought by the Spirit poured forth, as a thing wherein such a good state of things doth very much consist. Here I shall show,

1. That such a union amongst christians will contribute very much to a happy state in the church of God whenever it is brought about. It

would, 1. Secure it very much from external violence. Hereby it would be "terrible as an army with banners," would dismay enemies, and such as might design to trouble it. Such union would make way for undisturbed communion. And, 2. Within the church itself there would be free and pleasant commerce. Christians would not be at a loss and difficulty what way they were to take in order to the stated discharge of incumbent christian duties. And what, in both these respects, such a union will contribute unto the common felicity of the christian church, we are too well taught to apprehend by our experience and observation of what we have felt or heard of the mischiefs and miseries of the church in both these kinds. How miserably hath Christendom been worried by the Turkish power upon account of its own divisions! And within the christian church itself never hath it suffered more turmoils, and trouble, and vexation than from intestine divisions. It hath been a common observation in the former days, that the Arian persecution was as cruel and wasting to the sincere christians as ever the pagan persecutions were, and some have reckoned a great deal more. And we do not need to tell you what the popish persecutions have been upon the protestants, and what persecutions have been even among protestants of one another. The church hath first been broken into parties, then these several divided parties have fallen to contending, and those contentions have grown to that height that nothing less than the ruin of each several party hath been designed by another. And you cannot but observe or have known that differences upon the slightest and most trivial matters have been managed with that heat and animosity that

nothing less could content and satisfy than even to crush unto utter ruin those who have dissented. But where were all that contention if the contending parties were become all one? And where were all that hatred, and enmity, and malice that hath managed these contentions? For what! doth any united thing, entire within itself, hate itself, and seek to ruin itself? I proceed, therefore, to show,

2. That it is the work of God's own Spirit to effect such a union, and consequently, that when it shall be generally poured forth, such a union must needs generally obtain. And the matter will be very clear from sundry scripture considerations, as,

(1.) We find in scripture this matter mystically and allegorically represented, that is, that by the anointing of this Spirit, that precious ointment plentifully poured forth upon the head of our great High-priest, and diffusing itself unto all that appertain and belong to his body, that good and pleasant thing should be brought about of brethren dwelling together in unity. This is typically represented by the ointment shed upon Aaron, diffused unto the skirts of his garments, Psalm cxxxiii. 1, 2. It can have no other meaning, but that the anointing of the Holy Ghost, eminently and in the first place upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and thence diffused to all that relate to his body, brings this blessed thing about.

(2.) We find this anointing of the Holy Ghost upon christians mentioned in scripture as the great preservative against divisions. So you may see by perusing the greater part of 1 John, chap. ii. There is a discourse, as it is much the subject of the epistle, about the vital love that ought to be amongst the brethren, and thence he comes to take notice of a danger that would threaten christians from the

many antichrists that would arise, and that had in part risen; “As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time,” ver. 18. For so it was said that it should be in the latter times, or in the last part of time, even that from Christ unto the end of the world. Now wheresoever there are such antichrists starting up, pro-christs, mock Christs, those concerning whom it should be said, “here is Christ, and there is Christ;” every one of these makes it his business to draw away a part, and so all their design is division, to snatch from themselves and draw off from Christ; “He that gathers not with him scattereth.” Their endeavour and aim is to divide. But, as a great preservative against the malignity of this design, the apostle tells them, that “they had an unction from the holy One,” ver. 20. This was their security. And at ver. 26, 27. “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you;” the anointing of this Spirit whereof we speak. A plain signification that the genuine work of this Spirit is to unite and to hold the parts of the body of Christ united, tight, and firm unto one another. As much as if he should have said, You were lost, the body of Christ were dissolved, were it not for such an anointing; there are many that make it their business to draw away here a limb and there a limb, to pluck and dissect it part from part; but ye have an anointing, there is all your security.

(3.) The divisions which fall out in the church of Christ, we find in scripture attributed unto the want, and absence, and destitution of the Spirit. A

plain argument that union is its work where it is, and according to the degree in which it is amongst the people of God. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit," Jude 19. And as a like note and expression of sensuality, you have the apostle Paul speaking, in Rom. xvi. 17, 18. "Mark them which cause divisions and offences, and avoid them; for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." A sensual sort of men, amongst whom there is little appearance of the Spirit, of being governed by the pure and holy Spirit of God. And whom can we think him to reflect upon in such expressions, those who separate themselves and cause divisions, but such as do make new terms of communion in the church of Christ, which Christ himself hath never made, and insist upon them; you shall not have communion with us, unless you will come to these terms? As the gnostics of old did, patching up a religion partly out of judaism, and partly out of heathenism, and partly out of christianity, and so making themselves a distinct body upon new terms from the rest of christians. And so the papists have since done, and being associated and compacted together upon these terms, now assume to themselves the name and title of the church; they only are the church! cutting off themselves by such measures as these from all the rest of christians as if they were none of the church, because they do not consent with them in things that are beside christianity, and against it. And by how much the less and more minute the things are, by which persons make such difference and distinction, upon which they sort and sever themselves from the rest of christians so as to exclude all others, so much

the more groundless and ridiculous is the division. A like case, as if a company of men should agree amongst themselves to be distinguished from other men by such or such a habit, such or such a colour of their garments, and call themselves mankind, and deny all others to be mankind. Or as if a party in the city should distinguish themselves by some little trivial distinction, and call themselves the city, and deny all the rest to be citizens. This is from not having the Spirit. That Spirit, wheresoever it is, and works in power, works like itself, suitably unto the greatness and excellency of such a Spirit, and suitably to the grand designs of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Spirit it is. It possesses and takes up the minds of men with things that are great, and does not teach them to insist upon themselves, or to impose and urge upon others niceties and small trivial matters. Is this like the Spirit of the great and holy God? like the wisdom and holiness of that Spirit? or suitable to the greatness of those designs which it is to manage amongst men? So they that divide upon such accounts as these are, are sensual, not having the Spirit, and serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies. And, therefore, according to the degree in which such divisions have taken place amongst christians, they have been spoken of not as spiritual but as carnal. "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal," saith the apostle to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iii. 1. I could not tell how to look upon you, or converse with you, or apply myself to you, as spiritually-minded men, but as men miserably carnal, even lost in carnality. "For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" ver. 3. It is

not like a christian spirit, like the christian design, but like other men. And therefore we also find that where the works of the flesh are enumerated, Gal. v. 19. &c., among them come seditions, heresies, by which there are sidings, part-takings, part set against part, one party against another, and severings, divulsions, and rendings in the church, plucking it, as it were, piecemeal this way and that. In opposition whereto divers things that have the contrary tendency, as love, meekness, peace, &c., are made the fruits of the Spirit in the following verses.

(4.) The unity that doth obtain in the christian church in what degree soever it doth obtain, is called the unity of the Spirit; as in Eph. iv. 3. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." A unity, therefore, no doubt it is, whereof the Spirit is the author and the preserver, according as it doth keep the bond of peace unbroken amongst christians, keeps them in a peaceable temper and deportment towards one another. The Spirit of God is the warrantee of the church's peace, and it is his part to preserve it entire; but yet, so as that every one hath a part of his own in a way of duty, and in subordination to the Spirit of God, to act too; and must contribute to it, each one in his place and station. And, therefore, as though there be ever so potent a warrantee of peace amongst nations, it is possible that these nations may, by their own default, fall foul upon one another; so it may be, proportionably, in this case. Christians by indulging the first risings of another spirit, a contentious, malignant spirit, may grieve that Spirit who is to be their preserver, causing him to retire and withdraw, and so he may leave them to look on, and see what their end will be, and what

they will bring matters to themselves. As, when he hides his face, and withdraws his Spirit, the great God saith, “ I will hide my face, and see what the end will be,” Deut. xxxii. 20. But what unity there is, that is true and of the right kind, is the unity of the Spirit : and that shows it is his proper work, where it doth obtain, and according to the measure wherein it is poured forth, to cause and preserve such unity.

(5.) The subject of such a union is also the seat, and receptacle, and habitation of the communicated Spirit. That which is the subject of such a union is also the subject and dwelling-place, as I may speak, of the indwelling Spirit : it comes to dwell there, where the proper subject of this union is. That is a signification to us, that it hath a great influence upon this union ; that where it dwells, there cannot but be some union, a union even in the main and principal things amongst all living christians. They are all “ come as lively stones unto the living corner-stone,” 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. and compacted into “ an habitation of God through the Spirit,” Eph. ii. 22. Where the union is, there the Spirit is, in contradistinction to all the rest of the world. That part where the Spirit of God inhabits is his church. And, therefore, to be added to the church, or to become christian, if a man become so indeed, is, at the same time, to receive the Spirit. “ Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ? Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit ?” Gal. iii. 2, 3. They were supposed to have received the Spirit, and to have begun in the Spirit, inasmuch as they were christians. And, therefore, one of the last things that the apostle Peter spoke to his hearers in that sermon by which so many

thousands were converted was, "Repent,---and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost," Acts ii. 38. If ye be converts in truth, the Holy Ghost immediately comes upon you. Indeed, in their becoming converts it seizes them : and when it hath made them converts, and formed them into a habitation, then it comes and dwells, and they receive it as an inhabitant ; as a house must be built before it be inhabited : and he that was the builder is the inhabiter. Hereupon it is said, that " they that have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his," Rom. viii. 9. They that are related to him, and they that are unrelated, are discerned by this, the having or not having his Spirit : Christ's Spirit enters and possesses all his. The true christian church, the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ, as that is the seat and subject of the union whereof we are speaking, so it is also the residence of the Spirit : and, therefore, certainly the Spirit hath much to do in the business of this union.

(6.) The very cause of this union amongst christians, so far as it doth obtain, is the oneness of this Spirit. It is because that Spirit is one, who dwells every where in them all, that they are one. And so it doth appear that the Spirit is not only there seated, and dwells in the same subject where the union is ; but it is the very cause why there is such a union in the body, because it dwells in every part of it. " There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling," Eph. iv. 4. And the reason why the members of the body, though they are many, are yet said to make but one body, is because " by one Spirit they are all baptized into one body, and have been made to drink into one Spirit," 1 Cor. xii. 13. as if it should have been

said, You are so little one upon any other account, or under any other notion, than only as one Spirit hath diffused itself among you, and cements you together, and refers and disposes you towards one another; that the body of Christ would be no more one than a rope of sand, there would be no more cohesion of the parts, but if there were opportunity, part would be severed from part. The body, though it consist of many members, yet is all one body, because ye have been all baptized into one Spirit, and made to drink into one Spirit. Referring to the two sacraments, baptism, and the supper of our Lord; as both of them significative of the union which persons do then enter into with the rest of the body; and as they are confirmed in it with the rest of the body, according as they make use of, or are subjected to one or the other of these rites. And so you know it is in the natural body. What other reason can we render why so many parts should all but constitute one man? He hath one bond, one internal living bond, one soul. If there were one soul in one part, and another soul in another part; one soul in a leg, and another in an arm, another in an eye, and another in an ear; then it would not be one man, but many. The union is to be reduced into this, that there is but one soul as a consistent standing principle. For the parts of a man's body, as the parts of a church, are in a continual flux, continually passing; they wear and waste, and there is a constant succession of new parts to make up for those that are past away and gone: and yet there is but one man still, notwithstanding that great change of parts in the several successions of time in his life, because he hath still but one soul. And so the church is still but one

and the same thing, because it hath one Spirit, that in all times hath acted uniformly and equally.

(7.) It appears to be proper to the Spirit to work and maintain such a union as this ; inasmuch as the principal operation, which it doth exert and put forth as the chief and main work which it doth, doth always necessarily imply this, of uniting and keeping the parts of the body united, as a secondary and consequential work. It cannot do its principal work, but it must do this. What is its principal and main work ? It is, (as hath been intimated,) unto the church of Christ, even as a soul unto the body. And what is the office and business of the soul to the body ? It is to animate the body, to enliven it in the several parts of it : but that it could never do, but by uniting the parts and keeping them united. You know that if a finger, or a toe, or a leg, or an arm be cut off from the body, the soul enlivens that no longer : therefore it animates it, as it keeps it united with the body. The case is manifestly thus here ; the Spirit of God keeps the body alive, and all the several parts of the body which it animates by holding them together. As all the members of this body partake of other privileges in a community, as they belong to the body ; as for instance, that of peace, and that communion which it includes and carries in it. “ Ye are called to it,” saith the apostle, “ in one body,” Col. iii. 14. Ye are to share and partake in such a privilege, as being all of a piece, all of one body ; called in one body to this great commerce of christian peace and communion. You know that full peace between people and people, nation and nation, doth include commerce. So we may say of life too ; persons are called to the participation of life all in one body, as

being parts of that body, they come to share in life. The Spirit doth not animate, but as it unites, and keeps united the several parts which it animates; no more than our soul will animate any part of our body that is once separate from it. Now this plainly argues it to be the work of the Spirit to effect and maintain this union.

(8.) All the terms of this union, wherein christians do meet, are such whereunto they are disposed and inclined by this Spirit. You have these terms in Eph. iv. 4, &c. The apostle had said, that there was one body and one Spirit. Now wherein doth this Spirit make this body one? Why, "even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;" inasmuch as they have all one hope, and all one Lord, and one faith, and one baptism, and one God and Father of them all. Now it is manifest, that it is the work of the Spirit to draw and dispose the hearts of christians to meet in these common terms. As, to meet in this as a common term, in one hope, one blessedness and state of life. You know how the rest of the world are divided about blessedness; one places his confidence in this sort of good, and another in that sort: there are numbered up no less than two hundred and eighty-eight opinions among the heathens heretofore about blessedness, wherein it should consist. Now how come all sincere christians to agree in this, to hope for blessedness all in one thing, in that state of life and glory that is hereafter to be enjoyed? and that all, in all times of the world, should have met in the same hope? All this must be owing to one cause, and proceed from one principle. The rest of men are divided; why are they united in this hope? And so, as to the rest, if we should run over them. They have

all one Lord, sincerely agree to be subject to that one head; he shall rule over us, we will all trust him, and all obey him. They have all one faith; are all of one religion as to the essentials and main of it, believe all the same substantial truths, and all by one and the same sort and kind of faith; have the same object of faith in the main, and the same subject too in the nature and kind of it. They have all one baptism; which is not to be understood so much of the sign, as of the thing that is signified by it; that is, the covenant and agreement that passes between God and them that are baptized with his Spirit; unto whom the external baptism comes to obtain the thing which is intended to be signified corresponding in them. They all agree in one baptism, all come under one title, all give up and devote themselves under the bond of God's covenant alike, and in one and the same covenant. For God doth not make one covenant with one person, and another covenant with another; but they all meet in the same covenant. "And one God and Father of all." How come they all to have this one God and Father? It is one Spirit that disposes and forms them hereunto. And in short, holiness, real substantial goodness, which doth some way or other include all these, as meeting in every one of them, and so uniting them. All sincere christians meet in that. And how come they to meet in it? by chance? No, certainly; but by one designing Cause, that works them all the same way. That so great a community, so vast a body as the christians of all times and ages, the people of God, in all the parts of the world and in all times of it, should all meet and unite in so many things, and in this one thing, namely, substantial goodness and holiness, must

needs be all from one cause. They being things, too, wherein they cannot be supposed to agree naturally; for naturally men are most disagreeing and repugnant as to such things as these. And therefore we may see, (that which it is very remarkable that a heathen should say, speaking of concord in a city,) “That there can be no concord at all in any thing, if there be not some common notices, wherein persons shall meet and agree. So (speaking in reference to common and ordinary affairs) it were impossible that persons should agree about the numbers of things, if there were not amongst them some common knowledge about the difference of numbers. If one person should understand one to be the number five, and another should understand it by another thing; or if persons could not generally understand so much of the matter of number, as to distinguish five from seven, (one number from another,) they could have no agreement in any common matter, wherein number was concerned. And so,” saith he, “if there be any accord about things that come under measure, it is to be supposed, that there must be a common notice amongst all such persons, so far as to understand the difference between a palm and a cubit. And so there will be no agreement in things, that are of greater concernment to the good of a city, but by agreeing in this, that all agree to be good men: they cannot be good citizens, without being good men.” But how should men come to be so? How should there come to be such a number of men, all agreeing in one thing and design, to be all for God in a world that is revolted and apostatized from him? It must be all from one cause and principle. It is one and the same Spirit, that in all times and ages works and disposes the

spirits of such one way ; so as that you may observe, that in all times there have been amongst christians the same complaints, the same desires, the same designs ; they have had the same sense of things. Such a uniformity, as doth appear even in the several successions of time, signifies, that there is one common, unitive principle, that hath obtained amongst them all in all times ; and so accordingly, that such a union must needs be the proper work of this blessed Spirit.

(9.) When a people do fall off, and break themselves off from God, (which they never do, but as this Spirit departs and leaves them,) according to that degree wherein they do so, they are broken off from one another, broken asunder amongst themselves. This we have emblematically represented in Zech. xi. by the two staves of Beauty and Bands. When one of them, the staff of Beauty, was broken, (that was the representation of the union that was between God and them,) next the staff of Bands is presently broken, which was the representation of the union between Judah and Israel, of the people amongst themselves, verses 10, 11. 14. When God saith, Loammi, ye shall be my people no more ; then the consequence is this, they cease to be a people ; they are no more *one* people, when they cease to be *his*. The case is not so with those who have professed visible relation to God, as with the rest of the world in this thing. Others make shift to subsist and live without God, that is, they gain flourishing kingdoms, and commonwealths, and cities ; and it may be a people professing the name of God may expect to have it so with them too, if God should depart from them : but his presence is as a soul amongst such a people ; “ Be instructed, lest my

soul depart from you.” And if a man’s soul go from him, he doth not then become a creature of the next inferior rank, a beast, but a carcase. If this soul depart from a people professing relation to God, (as there is a divine presence that is larger than the most special presence, and yet more restrained than the general presence that he affords to men as men,) they do not then become like another people, but they become no people. “Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest thou become desolate, a land not inhabited,” Jer. vi. 8. They may think, it may be, that it will be with them as with other nations, when God is gone. But see what a rebuke any such hope meets with, in Hos. ix. 1. “Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people; for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God,” &c. The case will not be with you as with other people; you have forsaken your God, torn yourselves off from him. When the staff of Beauty is broken, the staff of Bands is broken too; and such a people as fall off from God, fall asunder: that it comes to at last; as the body of a man, when the soul is gone, dissolves and turns to dust.

(10.) In the time of the revival of the church from under the state of death they have been in; when God so revives it, he unites it part to part. How clearly have you this represented in vision after vision, in the whole thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel! When the spirit of life entered into those dry and dead bones, when he breathed upon them and made them live, he made them one, he made them a great army, ver. 10. And the next thing that you hear of is, this people’s being made one stick in God’s hand; Judah and Israel one stick, united with

one another ; and in God's hand, to signify him to be the centre of that union, ver. 19. When there is a recovery of the church out of a lapsed, apostatized state, out of that death that hath been upon it ; then also part comes to part, as there the bones came together, and flesh, and sinews ; and so every thing falls into its own place and order in each particular body ; and all these bodies into such an order, as to make one collective and well-formed body. And so it is very plain too, that when God doth design to bring that state of things about in his church, as that he will now have his covenant with them to obtain everlastingly, so as never more to turn away from doing them good ; then he hath promised that he will give them one heart and one way. Even at the same time, when he comes to be more visibly and eminently in the view of the world engaged to such a people as their God, and to have taken them exemptly from all other people to be his people ; when this comes to be more explicit and notorious, so that all the world may take notice of it, and so that he will dwell with them, and be visibly present amongst them, have his glory amidst them, and not cease to do them good ; so these things are expressed, Jer. xxxii. 37—41. at the same time he gives them one heart and one way, so as that they are no more a rent and torn and shattered people, but all one, all agreeing about the very way of their walking with God according to that relation wherein they stand to him.

All these things do evidence, that such a union is the proper work of the Spirit ; and that when it shall be poured forth generally and copiously, then this union shall obtain in a very great and visible glory.

I should after all this speak a little more particularly to a twofold inquiry concerning this union : but of that hereafter.

From what hath thus far been said, we may take notice, that our own divisions are a very sad argument to us, that the Spirit is in a great measure retired and withdrawn ; that little of the Spirit is working amongst christians in our times, in comparison of what hath been, and in comparison of what we may hope will yet be. But it is grievous, whatsoever hath been, whatsoever shall be, that it is our lot to be in such a time, when there should be such a gloomy overcast upon the glory of the christian church in this respect. What we see and what we hear of that distance and disunion amongst christians, is a sad argument, that the church is in a dismal lapse, the Spirit of God is in a great measure gone from amongst us, life retired and gone. If He were amongst us to enliven, He would be amongst us to unite.

SERMON XII.

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 25, 1678

THAT which we have been upon in the last discourse was—That union amongst them that own and bear the christian name, we may reckon, will be one great effect of the Spirit poured forth; upon which the happiness of the church will greatly depend. Two things have already been spoken to upon this head.

1. That such a union is of great concernment to the happiness and prosperity of the church; and, 2. That it is the proper work of the Spirit of God to effect it; and consequently, that when that Spirit shall be generally poured forth, such a union cannot but generally obtain.

There are two further inquiries, which it will be requisite we somewhat insist upon relating to this matter.

I. What kind of union this shall be, which we may expect the Spirit poured forth to accomplish.

II. In what way we may expect the Spirit to accomplish it.

I. What kind of union we may expect it to be. And we may expect it shall be such in the general, as wherein the duty and happiness of the christian church shall in very great measure consist; such as is required as matter of duty, and promised as matter

of gift; and which will contribute much to the church's felicity. But inasmuch as we neither expect the church of God on earth to be perfectly sinless, nor perfectly happy; therefore we cannot expect this union to be perfect. Nor, therefore, can we suppose any such things requisite to it, as must be thought requisite unto a perfect union. We cannot think it necessary that this Spirit poured forth should be, as poured forth or communicated, an infallible Spirit in order thereto, when it comes to be amongst men or in them: which you know some have thought very necessary in order to any union in the church of God; but have pretended highly to it, without being able to agree where to fix the seat of the spirit of infallibility they pretend to have amongst them. And since a union and agreement in holiness is as necessary for the church of God, as in truth, one would think there should have been as much pretence to an impeccable spirit as to an infallible, and every whit for as valuable reason. But they have been ashamed to pretend to the former, whilst the pretenders have been so notoriously vicious and vile in the view of all the world. And certainly, if there were an infallible spirit amongst such men, we may justly say it was ill lodged and unfitly in the midst of such horrid impurities; and did no more become them, than a jewel of gold a swine's snout. But that we may be a little more particular here, we shall briefly show, 1. What a union we are not to expect; 2. What union there already is amongst all living christians; and, 3. What union we are farther to look and hope for.

1. What union we are not to expect.

(1.) Not such, as that all shall agree in the same

measure of knowledge ; and consequently, that there will not be an identity and sameness of apprehension throughout in all things ; for then there must be the same measure of knowledge. There is no man, that thinks differently from another man, but he thinks so differently either truly or falsely ; and wherever the falsity lies, on the one hand or the other, there lies so much ignorance : but it is never to be thought that all will have just the same measure of knowledge.

(2.) Nor can we reasonably expect an agreement with all in the same pitch of holiness ; that all will be holy alike ; no one more holy, more spiritual, more heavenly than another.

(3.) Nor are we to expect that all should agree in the same measure of joy or consolation ; that there should be the same sensations of divine pleasure in all, the same pleasant motions of holy and spiritual affections ; which, be they as holy and spiritual as they will, yet must also be complexional in a degree, and depend much even upon the bodily temper, wherein no man can think that all shall ever agree.

(4.) Nor can there be such a union as shall infer that all must be of the same rank and order, the same station and use in the church of God ; which indeed would not belong to the perfection of union, but imperfection ; it would be confusion, instead of regular and perfect union.

Such kind of union we are not to expect. And it is to be considered farther in reference to this matter.

2. What kind of union there already is.

And certainly some union there is among all those who are sincere and living christians : such I

chiefly intend as the subject of the union whercof I am discoursing. And there is, and cannot but be amongst all such, a union in those great and substantial things, which we have already had occasion to take notice of, in Eph. iv. 3, 4. They are all one body, one living animated body by one and the same Spirit. They have all one hope of their calling, one happiness and end; one Lord, one faith; they are all substantially of one religion; one baptism, meaning by that, (as hath been noted,) not so much the sign as the thing signified; they are all comprehended within the bond of the same covenant of life and peace. They have all “one God the Father of all, who is of all, and in all, and through all.”

And which sums up all this, one way or another, they are all united in one common Head. The apostle, speaking of Christ, says, “He is the head of the body, the church,” Col. i. 18. And to the same purpose in Eph. i. 22, 23. And by virtue of that union they have with Christ the Mediator, the head of the church, it comes to pass, that they do unite and agree besides in all the other things that were mentioned. They are all of his body. It is from him they all partake of that one and the same Spirit. It is he who hath opened heaven to them, given them a prospect of an eternal blessed state, brought life and immortality to light before their eyes. They are called by him in that one hope of their calling. It is a revelation from God by him, that is the matter of their common faith. He is the Mediator of that covenant, which comprehends them all. It is he that reduces, and restores, and reunites them to God, and sets all things right

between him and them. Therefore herein is the sum of their union, that they have all one Head, wherein they are united.

And this their common head is not only a political, but a vital head; as is apparently enough represented in those most emphatical expressions, Eph. iv. 15, 16. where the metaphor is distinctly pursued of a union between the head and the body: That, "speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted, by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." With which agrees that in Col. i. 18. "He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead," &c. And that in chap. ii. 19. "Not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." All these expressions speak a vital union, such as every member in the body hath with the head, being by proper ligaments jointed into its own place, and so connected with those that finally and ultimately have more immediate connexion with the head; from whence there are those several ducts, those conveyances of spirits, by which the head doth become a fountain of directive and motive influence unto the whole body. And so is our Lord Jesus Christ unto the church a Fountain both of directive and motive influence, of light and life.

He is a Fountain of light to all true christians
For every beam of true light is a ray from that "Sun

of righteousness," shines from and through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are under a dispensation, wherein "the Father speaks to us by his Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 2, 3. This world were universally a region of nothing else but pure mere darkness, were it not for him, "the light that lighteneth every one that cometh into the world," according to the several variations, and degrees, and kinds of light that shine here and there. And,

He is also a Fountain of life and vital influence. That very light is vital light, the light of life. "The life was the light of men," John i. 4. And for all that have real union with him, it is because he lives, that they live also.

Herein therefore they have union with this Head. They all participate together in the light of divine truth, whereof he hath been the Teacher; of all that saving wisdom and knowledge that is treasured up in him. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. And all that are really of his body, unite and meet in a participation of necessary light and knowledge from him; they partake according to their measure of necessary truth from that fountain, so much as is essential unto the christian religion, and necessarily concurs unto the constituting of that. And they all agree in the participation of motive and active influence from him, for the performance of all the essentially necessary duties and exercises that do belong to the christian life. Such a union there is amongst all sincere christians. This is implied in the expression of holding the head before mentioned. They truly hold the head, who are so united to it, as that by virtue

of that union they receive and derive thence the knowledge and perception of all essentially requisite truth, and that life and power that is also requisite to the duty which lies upon christians as such.

There hath been a great deal of controversy, between the reformed and those of the Roman church, about that distinction of the essentials and extra-essentials of christianity. But let men cavil as long as they will, it would manifestly be the most absurd thing in all the world to deny the distinction: for if any would deny it, I would inquire of them, Which part of the distinction is it, that you would deny? Would you deny, that there are essential parts of christianity? or else, that there are extra-essential parts? If the distinction be not good, one of these parts must be denied. But if any would say, there are no essential parts, that would be to say, that the christian religion hath no being; for certainly that is nothing, unto which nothing is essential. And to say, that there are no extra-essential parts, is to say, that a man cannot be a christian unless he know every thing of truth, and unless he punctually do every thing of duty, whether he know it or not. Then a man could not be a christian unless he did certainly know the meaning of the number six hundred and sixty-six, and a thousand difficult passages besides up and down the scripture. So that in effect, to deny the distinction of essential and extra-essential parts in christianity, or of it, must either be to deny that there is any such thing as christianity, or that there is any such thing as a christian. If there be no essential parts, christianity is nothing; for that is nothing, to which nothing is essential. And if there be none extra-essential,

then there are no christians; for certainly there is no man that knows and does every thing that belongs to the christian religion. But that there are essential parts, and therefore extra-essential too, is most evident. And which the essential parts be, in contradistinction to all others, is not obscurely intimated to us in the scripture itself, in such summaries of christian doctrine and practice, as we have pointed to us here and there in some remarkable texts. As, when we are told, "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." 1 Cor. viii. 6. Where we have the great objects, upon which religion terminates; God considered as God, the end; and Christ the Mediator, the way to that end. And then we are not without what is summary too of the acts to be done in reference to those objects. The apostle, speaking of the course he had taken in unfolding the mysteries of the gospel, resolves all into this sum; he had been "testifying both to Jews and Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts xx. 21. Which are such acts or parts of christian practice, as belong to the inchoation* of the christian course at first, and then to be continued afterwards through it; but so as to comprehend many particulars of practice besides; whereof our Lord Jesus Christ gives us another summary; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." And, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments," saith he, "hang all the law and the prophets,"

- * Beginning.

Matt. xxii. 37, &c. And indeed you have objects and acts implicitly comprehended together in that great summary, which is expressive of the faith, into which Christ directed his apostles to proselyte all nations, into which they were to baptize them; that is, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matt. xxviii. 19. Where the Father is to be considered as the end, the Son as the way, and the Spirit as the great principle to move souls towards that end through that way. Now there are none, that are sincere and living christians, but do and must unite in such things as these, these great essentials and substantials of the christian religion.

But it may now be said; if there be so much union amongst all christians already in these so great and substantial things; what further union must we look for? which was the third thing we proposed to speak to upon this head;

3. What further union we are yet to expect and hope for.

And it must be acknowledged, and ought to be lamented, that there is all this union with very much disunion; such disunion that is in a high degree dishonourable to God, scandalous to the world, and uncomfortable to the christian community within itself. You well know, that there may be one house standing upon one foundation; and yet miserably shattered, ill supported, ill covered. There may be one large family, all under one family-governor; and yet many sidings and contentions in it, many parties and part-takings, this way and that. The like may be said of a city, a kingdom, an army, or any such aggregate body. The like may be said even of a man himself, that hath, while he is a man,

several parts united in him ; but yet this living man may be sick, very sick, and even nigh to death, in a most languishing state. Soul and body are still united, and several parts in the body still united with one another ; but it may be some dying, some dead, all languishing at least ; and, as the case is in some diseases, one member falling foul upon another, the man beating, hurting, wounding himself. The parts are still in union ; but this is a union very remote from what belongs to a sound, sober, healthy man, in good plight every way. And so the matter is with the christian church too. We do acknowledge such a union in all the fore-mentioned things, in all things of that nature : but it is with a most scandalous and pernicious disunion. We do not think that the Spirit of God hath totally forsaken the christian church ; but it is plain, it is miserably languishing and next to death ; according to the import of that expression to the Sardian church, “Strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die,” Rev. iii. 2. There is truth, but wrapt up in obscurity, and held in unrighteousness ; as is too obvious to common observation. And therefore it is another sort of union than this is, in respect of the degree and perfection of it, that we are yet to look for ; and which certainly the Spirit, when poured forth copiously and generally, (as we are encouraged to hope it will be,) will effect and bring about. This union, which we are to expect, (as indeed the union, which already we have in nature and kind,) is to be both intellectual and cordial. We are to expect an improvement of it unto a much higher degree in both these kinds, a higher union both of judgment and love.

(1.) A much higher intellectual union, than we hitherto find; a nearer union and agreement in mind and judgment amongst christians. And it is very unreasonable not to expect it, when we consider how plain and express the charge is concerning that kind of union; it is very unreasonable to think that the people of God, the community of christians, shall be always in so notorious a discrepancy from their rule, even in this particular case. See the solemnity of that charge, in 1 Cor. i. 10. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Do we think the christian community shall be never nearer the rule in this case than it is? We have reason to expect it shall; and especially since we find it is so expressly foretold, that in the latter days (which this discourse we have in hand hath reference to) "one heart shall be given, and one way," Jer. xxxii. 39. Certainly there shall be so much agreement in minds and judgments, as shall lead the people of God all into one way; for such a word cannot fall to the ground, and is not put into the bible to stand for a cipher there. And we have it expressly promised, that of them that are all intent to press forward towards the same mark, and wherein they have attained, to do all to their uttermost to "walk by the same rule; if in any thing they be otherwise minded, God shall reveal this to them," Phil. iii. 15, 16. It is also expressly promised by our Lord Christ himself, that 'they that will do his will shall know the doctrine whether it be of God,' John vii. 17. yea or no.

Certainly, when the Spirit comes to be so copiously and generally poured forth, men will be attuned more to the will of God ; there will be more earnest minding and endeavouring to do his will ; self-will will not be the common rule and law amongst those who bear the name of christians, as now it is ; and upon this is that great promise grounded ; all that is required is, “ If any man will do his will, he shall know his doctrine.” There is no such necessary and certain qualification for the knowledge of divine truth, as sincerity ; when men do inquire for truth, not to gratify curiosity, not to serve an interest, not to keep up a party, not to promote a base design ; but with sincere hearts, that they may understand what the good and acceptable will of the Lord is. They that are intent upon this, our Lord Christ will not fail them, nor break his promise, that such who will do his will, shall know the doctrine. There is a peculiar gust and relish, which the truth that is after godliness always carries in it to persons that are alive and well, and that have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. “ Cannot my taste discern perverse things ?” saith Job, chap. vi. 30. Has not a lively christian a taste to discern some things that are obstructive and destructive to the christian religion and the christian interest in the world ? A person alive and with senses exercised, will taste it out ; even as the new-born babe desires sincere milk, while it would refuse that which is corrupt and mixed with any thing ungrateful. Herein we are to expect much more of an intellectual union, or union in judgment concerning the great truths of God.

(2.) A much nearer and more inward cordial

union, a union of love. When the Spirit was more eminently poured forth upon Christ's ascension, see how it was with christians in that respect; "They continued daily with one accord in the temple," Acts ii. 46. Our translation renders it too faintly; they met together "all with one mind;" so the expression literally signifies. And chap. iv. 32. it is said, that believers were all of one heart and one soul. Of the multitude that believed there was but one heart and soul; as if they were a community, all acted and animated by one soul. However unlike itself the church of God is grown in a long tract of time, the Spirit of God is not grown unlike itself; and therefore when it comes to be poured forth as it hath been, it will still act as it hath done, uniformly and agreeably to itself; and make them that now are many parties, divided and shattered, broken this way and that, all one entire piece. How passionately longing do the apostle's expressions import him to be, in reference to this one thing, that is, the union composed of the two things I have mentioned, of a union in mind and judgment, and of a closure in heart and love, in Col. ii. 1, 2. "I would, that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh: that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." This is the union that he covets, and we must know that that Spirit, who is to be the author of this union, was no doubt the author of these very desires and longings of the apostle's soul

about it; it acts agreeably to itself. He desired and longed so earnestly for this, that they might be knit together both in love and understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, both the Father and the Son. And what have there been, even from the dictate and direction of the Spirit, so earnest longings for? why, though so long before, we are to account these very longings to be the earnest of the thing desired, and so to expect that whereof they are the earnest.

We thus far see what union we are not to expect, what already is, and what we are to expect and look for further than yet there is, or than yet we see.

Upon all this, while as yet we behold so little of so desirable a thing, we have reason to account that it is with the church of God a time of his hiding his face, and of the restraint of the Spirit. "I will no more hide my face, I will pour out my Spirit." While the Spirit is not poured forth, even with reference to this blessed end and work; this is the notion which we ought to have concerning the present state of the christian church; it is a time of God's hiding his face from them; the bright and glorious face that hath shone upon it sometimes, and that we are to expect should shine, is yet obscured and hid. And what should our posture be upon that account? while we must reckon this the common state and case of the christian church at this day; in what posture should our souls be? And surely—

[1.] It ought to be a very mournful posture. How hath he covered with a cloud in his anger the daughter of his people! How is her glory

confounded ! when he did decline to go with the people of Israel further on in their way towards Canaan, saying, “ I will send an angel before thee, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite,” &c. He shall destroy them for you ; but I will not go up in the midst of thee, I will not go with you any further ; “ The people,” it is said, “ when they heard these evil tidings, mourned, and no man did put on him his ornaments,” *Exod. xxxiii. 2—4*. It is a mourning time when the bridegroom is withdrawn : and there is no sadder token that he is withdrawn, than to behold the confusions which have ensued in his absence.

[2.] It ought to be an expecting, a waiting posture. Surely this dark and gloomy night will be succeeded by a morning. It will not be a perpetual eternal night ; there will be a time when the hid face will again appear, and the cloud remove. “ I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him,” *Isa. viii. 17*. And it should be an earnest, desirous, longing expectation. There can be no more dismal token upon us, than to be indifferent. He is gone, his face is hid, he is not to be seen ; and whether he come towards us again, whether we shall see him again any more, we regard it not ; this would be the most dismal token.

SERMON XIII.

PREACHED OCTOBER 2, 1678.

BESIDE the principles which the Spirit of God, when copiously and generally poured forth, will work in each individual person, tending to create a happy state of things in the church, we proposed to speak of two general effects, that must have the christian community as such for the subject of them, and not individual persons only; namely, union and order.

Much hath been said upon the former, the desirable effect of union. It hath been shown that the happiness of the church doth much depend upon this, and that it is the proper work of the Spirit of God to effect it: and then the last time we came to speak to a twofold inquiry.

1. What kind of union this is to be. This we have gone through, and now proceed to a second, namely,

2. In what way the Spirit of God poured forth may be expected to effect this union.

And there is no doubt but it will effect it by the same means by which it shall revive and recover religion, of which we have so largely spoken. At the same time when it makes the christian church

a living church, it will make it one, that is, in that higher and more eminent degree whereof we have been speaking. It is but one and the same thing, or is done by the same operation, the making the church more holy, and the making it one. What brings christians nearer to God and Christ, will certainly and infallibly at once bring them nearer to one another. For it is manifest that the greatest differences which are to be found in the christian world, lie between the godly and the ungodly, the converted and the unconverted, the sincere and the insincere. Whatever differences there are amongst the people of God themselves, those are still the greatest differences which lie between them and those who are not of them; for there the disagreement is about having the Lord for our God. Every ungodly man is his own idol; he hath yet this first step to take in religion, the choosing of God alone to be his God. Now the difference must needs be vast, between those who take the Lord for their God, and those who take him not, but serve a base and despicable idol, self, and make all to their very uttermost subservient unto that. The sincere and insincere differ about their last end; which is the greatest difference that can be imagined. All men's courses are shaped and directed by the ends which they propose to themselves: and to have the Lord for our God, and to have him for our supreme and ultimate end, is all one. Now how vastly must those ways needs differ, that lead to two directly contrary ends! Therefore still the greatest difference cannot but be between the godly and the earthly carnal-minded man, who hath himself for his god, and all the world if he could compass it, for a sacri-

fice to his own idol, himself. Men of that temper and complexion of soul are the men that stand most off from union, and that are the greatest schismatics in all the world: it cannot but be so. Therefore, whensoever the Spirit of God poured forth shall make men agree in having the Lord for their God, "This God shall be our God;" when men shall become more generally sincere and thorough christians; then it cannot but be, that they shall be united with one another, and agree in far greater things than it is possible they can differ from one another in. And therefore in the fore-mentioned Jer. xxxii. 38, 39. at the same time when it is said, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God;" it is immediately added, "And I will give them one heart and one way." This union cannot but be the result of more lively, serious religion, and of deeper impressions of godliness and of the divine image upon the souls of men. Not only as that union between the blessed persons in the Godhead is the pattern of union amongst the people of God; "that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee," John xvii. 21. but also as such a union is the certain and necessary result of other excellences, wherein the divine image doth consist, and wherein holy ones do and cannot but resemble God. One apostle giving an account of God, how we are to conceive of him, gives it us under these two notions that "he is light" and that "he is love," 1 John i. 5. iv. 8. 16. The image of God in these two things, more generally and vividly impressed upon men, doth this whole business, makes them all one. How blessed a union would there be when christians shall generally appear the representations of the blessed God

himself in these two things, a composition as it were of light and love.

Therefore, to give you more distinctly the account, how or in what way the Spirit poured forth should bring about this union, it will be,

I. By increasing of light and knowledge amongst them that bear the christian name every where in the world.

II. By giving greater measures of grace. By the former men shall generally come to be more knowing in things necessary to the union, and by the latter they shall be more patient of dissent from one another in things less necessary to be known.

I. By an increase of light and knowledge in things more necessary to be known. I do not mean here merely notional knowledge, as the apostle doth not mean that of God, when he saith that God is light; but I mean that knowledge received in the minds of christians that lies in the next immediate tendency to holiness; the knowledge of the truth that is after godliness, as such in that designed and direct tendency, as it doth attemper and dispose the minds of men unto the reception of truth as sanctifying. "Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, that he hath chosen you unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 13. The truth, as it lies in an immediate tendency to godliness, and is transformative of the soul into a holy and godly frame, so we must conceive it to be impressed in order to this blessed work. Otherwise there wants the cement, and that which should hold hearts together as intent and

directed all towards one common design and end. And unto this purpose we must suppose the Spirit poured forth shall heal the disaffection of men's minds unto such truth, or unto truth considered under that notion and upon that account. It hath a great work to do for this end upon the minds of men, the union that is to be brought about (as was observed upon the former head) being necessarily intellectual first and then cordial. It is in the mind that the first concoction of truth must be wrought, in order to a further and more perfect concoction in the heart afterwards. And whereas there is a manifold distemperature and malady even in the minds of men that renders them incapable of useful, practical gospel knowledge, the great work of the Spirit of God must be to remove and heal those infirmities and maladies of the mind, and to do it generally amongst christians, that so they may be brought to "increase in the knowledge of God," in divine knowledge, as the expression is, Col. i. 10. I might make a copious enumeration here of many such maladies and distempers in the mind, by which it becomes disaffected to truth; and which appear now to be epidemical evils, and need therefore a universal effusion of the Spirit to cure them, and so to bring about the intellectual union of which we speak. These maladies, though some of them be in the mind itself, yet most of them are originally in the heart, and thence come to affect and distemper the mind, and render it less susceptible of useful and savoury knowledge. As—

There is an unapprehensiveness too generally observable in the minds of men, a dulness towards the apprehension of truth. The Spirit of God, when it

comes to be generally poured forth, (as it was said to be upon the Messiah himself, on whom it was poured forth without measure, and thence to be transfused, as from a common fountain, unto all that have vital union with him,) “will make men of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord,” as it is expressed, Isa. xi. 3.

There is a slothful carelessness in the minds of most, a regardlessness and unconcernedness to know the great and deep things of God, and that causes a great disagreement and disunion in the christian world. There are many that stint themselves; they think they know enough, and desire to know no more, and cannot endure to be outgone by others, or that any should exceed their measure. As these latter times, with reference to which we speak, will certainly be times of very much knowledge, so they will be of very much inquiry; “Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,” Dan. xii. 4. There will not be a slothful, careless sitting down with a present measure and attainment, but there will be a “following on to know the Lord,” as you have it, Hos. vi. 3. And then the “promise of his going forth shall be prepared as the morning,” as it immediately follows. There will be always new and fresh breakings forth of divine light, ready to reward the endeavour of them that seriously set themselves to inquire and seek after it.

There is very generally observable with many much credulity, aptness to take up reports. “The simple,” says Solomon, “believeth every word,” Prov. xiv. 15. And hence it comes to pass that every one that can tell a plausible story, and a little set off any fancy and novel invention of his own,

makes it presently to obtain and pass for a revelation; and hence comes, as is obvious to common observation, much of that division that hath been observable in our days.

There is also, on the contrary hand, an excessive incredulity, or unaptness to believe things, because they are very great and glorious, and exceed the measures of our preconceptions or preconceived thoughts. The evil of which our Saviour upbraids his disciples with, that they were “slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken,” the things contained in the divine revelation that had been made before by the prophets concerning him, Luke xxiv. 25.

There is inconsideration, an inability to consider and weigh things, to ponder and balance them as the case may require. Men are apt rashly, and without using their understandings, to take up things upon their very first appearance. It is spoken concerning these latter days in Isa. xxxii. 4. that even “the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge;” of those that were so before they shall be cured of that malady. There is also an unaptness to consider, as well as an inability and indisposition to do it; many times from a kind of superstitious fear that men think they must not use their understandings to examine and search into things, that it is not yet permitted to them to do so; as if God had given men faculties which they were not to use. They might as well be afraid to look upon an object with their eyes, and to pry into it, and to labour that way to distinguish between one thing and another.

There is, opposite to that, a certain petulancy of mind; when men will make it their business to tear and unravel all principles, and they must have their

reason satisfied in every thing, or they will be satisfied in nothing.

There is an injudiciousness, an inability to conclude; with some, after considering ever so much, ever so long, the balance will never be cast. So many are "ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth," 2 Tim. iii. 7. never conclude, never determine, but are always as children tossed to and fro.

There is, again, a certain scepticism of mind with a great many, that when others have stated and settled, even by common agreement and consent in the christian church, such conclusions, yet declaim against every thing as uncertain, not only from a peculiar inability to make a judgment, but from a principle that there is no judgment to be made, and that there is nothing certain at all, or ought to be looked upon as such; which hath starved the christian church, and made it languish for a long time as to the matter of sound knowledge.

There is instability of judgment, that when men have concluded and determined upon good evidence, this is true, and ought to be adhered to accordingly, yet they are presently off again; and, therefore, are so remote from agreeing with the generality of other christians, that they are never found long to agree with themselves.

There is, as what is more directly opposite to the former, a certain kind of obstinacy of mind, prejudice, a fixed prepossession with corrupt and false principles, that once imbibed shall never be quitted, and which doth very frequently proceed from an enslavedness unto human dictates. That is, that they have taken some one or other to be a leader to

them and an orator, and so give away that faith which is due only unto a divine revelation, and ought to pitch and centre there, unto the fallible judgment of a man, in direct contradiction to that rule of our Lord Christ, Call no man Rabbi, call no man Master upon earth, Matt. xxiii. 8. 10. Do not enslave your minds and judgments to any man.

It must be supposed that whenever the Spirit of God doth that blessed work in the world to revive and recover religion and christianity, it will unite christians even by this means, the curing of these great maladies and distempers that are in the minds of men so generally, and by which they are rendered indisposed and averse to the entertainment and retention of sound gospel knowledge. For this spirit where it is given, is "the spirit of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7. The word that is rendered soundness of mind there, signifies sobriety, a spirit of sobriety. Indeed, that word doth commonly misguide men, and they apply it unto a thing far inferior in nature and dignity unto that which it truly signifies, as if it were to be opposed only to gross, sensual wickedness; but sobriety, as the very notation of the word doth import, hath its seat and subject in the mind, and doth firstly and chiefly affect that. A sound mind and a sober mind is all one. Till the Spirit of God do in these several respects cure men's minds, it is impossible there should be union or agreement, unless men do agree only in being diseased, or (which would not do the business neither) unless they could agree all to be in one disease, which would be a very unhappy union also. When, therefore, the Spirit of the living God shall universally come forth upon men, and create the world

christians, and create the christian world a region of light ; when He shall generally make men apprehensive, inquiring, serious, considerate, judicious, lovers of the truth even for itself, sincere, so as to entertain truth with no other design than only that the life of godliness may be promoted and served by it ; there cannot but then be, in a very great degree, the happy union obtaining amongst christians, whereof we have spoken.

But yet, when all this is done, we cannot suppose by it that men should be brought to know all things ; but still, there will be many things wherein they cannot but remain ignorant, and consequently dissent and differ in many things from one another. Therefore the Spirit of God poured forth must be supposed also to effect this union,

II. By making christians more generally patient of dissent from one another in less necessary things, which they may not still so generally know. And, if we consider what the genuine operations of the blessed Spirit of God are, and what kind of Spirit that is wherever it comes to obtain ; this cannot but be the general temper of christians, when that Spirit shall be eminently poured forth, that they shall be very patient of dissent from one another in things, wherein they continue to dissent. For,

1. We must suppose that the Spirit being generally so poured forth, there will be a greater ability to distinguish between truths that are of scripture revelation, and those that are not, and, consequently, which it is matter of duty to believe, and which not. For, undoubtedly, there is to be such a distinction made between truth and truth as any one may easily see at the first view. For we must know

that a thing is not therefore the necessary object of my assent because it is true, but because it is evident, or because it is credible, either evident in itself, or recommended as credible to me by the authority of him who doth reveal it. I am not bound therefore to believe a thing immediately because it is in itself true, for that it may be, and yet I have no means to know it to be so. But then is the obligation binding upon me to believe such a thing, when it is clothed with sufficient evidence to recommend itself unto my understanding. And whereas there are some things which God hath revealed, even all things that are any ways necessary either to the being or the well-being of religion, I must consider those things that lie not within the compass of that revelation, as what God hath left undecided unto men; he has left them undetermined, and so they may be matter of very innocent disagreement, of discourse and discussion, without any concernedness on the one part or the other.

2. Amongst revealed truths we may suppose men will be enabled to distinguish between the greater and the less, between those which are more necessary and less necessary.

3. We must suppose christians, then, to be generally more spiritual, and apt to be taken up more with the great things of religion, and less apt to be greatly and deeply concerned about matters of less consequence, so as to disturb and break the order and peace of the church upon the account of them.

4. We must suppose them to be more holy, less opinionative, less conceited and humoursome; which is that kind of knowledge that the apostle doth oppose to love, as not only unedifying, but destructive

of edification. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing," if he knows with a conceited reflection upon his own knowledge, admiring himself upon account of it; "he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know," 1 Cor. viii. 1. &c. Ignorance is better than his knowledge. Men will think more meanly of themselves and their own judgments, and either more highly or more charitably of other men; either think that possibly they may see that which themselves see not; or if they cannot apprehend so, yet at least that the men are sincere and upright-hearted towards God; as it is meet for them to judge, and not to be insolently censorious of such as do in such or such little matters differ from them; not to attribute to perverseness of mind every man's dissension of opinion from their own.

5. They must needs be supposed to be more compassionate unto those whom they suppose to know less than themselves; as knowing that there are many things which they themselves are ignorant of, and they shall never attain to know all things as long as they live. There are still all the genuine workings of the Spirit of God, so far as it obtains and prevails over the spirits of men; and so this among the rest.

6. Christians will undoubtedly then be formed unto a more awful and reverential subjection to God's own prescribed rules, concerning the boundaries and terms of christian communion. Men will not then dare to make terms of their own to limit the communion of christians as such; to devise new terms which Christ was never the author of, and will never own. But the authority of such a law

will obtain in the hearts of christians, that are become so serious and subject to the authority of God, as they must then be supposed to be, so as that they will extend their communion as far as it can be judged that God will extend his, and Christ will extend his. For that is the measure which is given us in these two passages. In one place it is said, Receive such a one, for God hath received him, Rom. xiv. 1. 3. Receive him for all his doubting, for all his difference from you : and why ? because the Lord hath received him. In another place it is thus expressed, “ Receive ye one another, as Christ hath received us, to the glory of God,” Rom. xv. 7. God receives such a one into his communion ; and shall not I receive him into mine ? Christ receives such a one, even unto the glory of the Father ; and shall not I receive him into my fellowship ? When once the spirits of men come to be awed into a subjection unto the divine authority in this thing, so as to reckon it profane to prescribe bounds and terms unto christian communion, other than God and Christ have prescribed themselves ; then no doubt will this blessed effect obtain and take place in the christian church, then will it become an entire united thing, one thing within itself, and never till then. As long as we must have terms of christian communion of men’s own devising, according to the different humours of men, they will still vary, and so we shall never know where to be.

Thus we have considered that first effect to be expected from the Spirit generally poured forth, in order to promote the peaceful state of the church, namely, the union of christians amongst themselves. I would add something concerning another particular

mentioned, as conducive also to the same peaceful state.

Second. Order is another blessed effect to be looked for from the pouring out of the Spirit, and that belongs unto the christian community as a community, and is most necessary unto the making up of that happy time and state of things, whereof we have been speaking. It is very plain that this superadds somewhat unto union. It is a bad union where there is not order. Union speaks the compactiveness of parts; order the due situation of them, that every one be in that place which duty belongs to it. Suppose there were ever so much union in the parts of the natural body, but the eyes were placed where the ears should be, and the hands where the feet should be; notwithstanding all the union of parts, the lack of order would make this thing uncomfortable to itself, and deformed and monstrous in the view of others. There are many members in one and the same body; and these members have all their distinct place, and use, and purpose that they serve for, as the apostle at large discourses, 1 Cor. xii. Now the Spirit of God cannot be poured forth, but it will infer a comely order in the christian church; by the same operation by which it gives it life, it will give it shape and comeliness, and a due figure and disposition of parts within itself. It was well said concerning this matter by a worthy person; "God will certainly not be wanting in point of shape and comely order to a church that hath a principle of life within itself." He that clothes lilies, and gives life unto the sensitive creatures, and gives them their own proper shape also, will no doubt do so unto the lively body of his own Son. He will never be

wanting to it in point of shape and comely order when it comes to be a lively, vigorous thing. By how much the fuller of life, so much certainly the order will be the more comely and pleasant, by its own choice, and much more as directed by his rules. To evince this, consider these several things.

1. The Spirit poured forth comes to be, in them that receive it, as a certain kind of nature; it is called the divine nature. Nature, you know, acts uniformly and orderly in all its operations. How regular are the courses of nature! How constant the returns of days and nights, of summer and winter! How strictly do all the species and kinds of things keep all their own kind, retain their properties, colours, virtues, ways, and methods of operation! The Spirit of God, working (as it is received in the hearts of christians) even as a certain kind of nature, must needs work uniformly; and so have a steady tendency to the begetting and keeping up of order in the whole community, that shall be aggregated by it.

2. It cannot be, but that, by how much the Spirit doth more obtain and shall be generally poured forth amongst men, each one will be more peculiarly adapted and fitted to the business of his own station, so as that he will thereupon choose that as fittest for him.

3. It cannot be, but that all men will be more debased and humbled, and equal estimators of themselves; and therefore apprehend not themselves fit for a station unto which they are not called.

4. The Spirit poured forth will no doubt make men more generally apprehensive of, and reverentially subject to the authority of God himself, in all

his own ordinances and appointments. And therefore where one is to teach, and others to be taught; some to govern, others to be governed; the authority that doth design men unto more public stations and capacities, will be considered as divine. We notionally know so much already; but it will be another thing when that impression is made upon the hearts of christians; "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God."

5. The Spirit poured forth cannot be without making men generally very tender of the community, unto which they belong: and of the whole christian community in general. As every one can easily apprehend how this would be prejudiced, if order be broken, and men commonly allow themselves the liberty to step out of their own ranks and stations to be and do what they are not called to be or do.

The concurrence of these things cannot but infer, that whenever the Spirit of God shall be generally poured forth, the christian church will fall into order: there will need no great hammering in reference to that, the business will even do of itself. All will know, and all will mind their own stations and the business of them; and apprehend their own unfitness for any station unto which God doth not call; and apprehend their privilege in not being so called, in being exempt from the cumber and burden of more public stations. As certainly exemption, if it were understood, is a very great privilege; when God doth not lay any further charge upon me than only to intend the business of a narrower station and a lesser sphere; when I can be vacant unto God, and for his commerce, and there walk with

him undisturbedly within my own line ; while others are eaten up with cares and solitudes concerning the common affairs that they are concerned in, and intrusted with the management of. No doubt the Spirit of God will help every man to make a true judgment of things when He comes to be generally poured forth : and this, that hath been just spoken of, cannot but be judged ; because it is a very great privilege to have freedom and vacancy for the proper business of a christian as such, within his own calling and verge ; when God shall, as it were providentially, say unto a man, “ I lay no other charge upon thee but to walk with me in thine own station and within the bounds of thine own calling, to make me the entire object of thy love and delight, and at all times to solace thyself with me ; I exempt thee from things that would disturb, and disquiet, and divert from the business and delights of such a continued course of walking with me.” When this comes to be generally understood, there will be little disposition in the minds of men to break order by usurping upon what belongs not to them.

Thus far you see that little else can be thought needful to the bringing about of a very happy time and state of things, besides the pouring forth of the Spirit.

SERMON XIV.

PREACHED OCTOBER 9, 1678.

WE have been showing in many discourses—What a good state of things or happy times are to be brought about by the Spirit of God poured forth. And hitherto we have been endeavouring at large to evince the efficacy and sufficiency of this means to the end mentioned; which was the first thing undertaken to be made evident. We are now to proceed to show,

Second. The necessity of this means to reach such an end: that as it is a sufficient means, you may also understand it to be the only means, of bringing such a work about. And for evincing this, two things, clear enough in themselves, seem abundantly sufficient. 1. That nothing can mend the world, but what mends the spirits of men; and, 2. That nothing can effectually do that, but the Spirit of the Lord poured forth. These are things that shine into our minds and understandings with their own light.

1. As to the former; what else, do we think, can mend the times, but what mends men's spirits? Doth not every thing necessarily act and work just as it is? How can the posture of the world come

to be other than at present, if the active principles of men's spirits continue the same?

2. And as to the latter; what besides the Spirit of God can effectually mend the spirits of men, so as to make the state of things thoroughly and generally better?

What other cause can be universal enough, and spread its influence far and wide, to make a better world? There wants a cause in this case, that can diffuse an influence a vast way. That a "nation should be born in a day," that "the earth should be filled with the knowledge of God," that there should be "new heavens and a new earth;" this needs a cause that can work every where: and what else can do this but the Spirit of the Lord? And again,

What other cause is potent enough, of sufficient energy, of virtue piercing and penetrative enough, to do such a work as must be done upon the spirits of men, before the state of things will come to be better? What else can shiver rocks, and melt down mountains, and make rough places plain? What else, do you think, can dissolve adamantine hearts, subdue insolent passions, assuage and mortify furious lusts? What else can change men's natures, transform the very habit of their minds, and make them generally quite other men, other creatures, than they have been? Unto what agent inferior to this can we attribute the ability to create? New heavens and a new earth are to be created, Isa. lxv. 17. You know how they were created at first: "By faith we understand, that the worlds were created by the word of God." The heavens and the earth were the products of the breath of his mouth, with all that is contained in them; so must the spiritual creation

be, as much as the natural. What, do we think, can make all the violences and mischiefs to cease out of the earth, that fill it with continual tragedies every where, and more or less at all times? Nothing is more evident, than that the Spirit of the Lord alone is a cause proportionable to such an expected effect.

And the matter will be yet more evident, if you do but consider these two things together.

1. That the spirits of men are most horribly depraved, and wickedly bent in themselves to such things as tend to nothing but destruction and calamity. It is said of men universally, that "destruction and misery are in their ways," Rom. iii. 16.
2. That all these wicked inclinations of men's spirits are continually fostered and fomented by another spirit distinct from their's, and over and beside theirs. "The spirit that worketh in" the hearts of "the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2. makes the world and the church miserable, so far as it prevails. Now what can we oppose to that spirit, but the Spirit of the living God? While that spirit is the great tormenter and disturber of the world, that disquiets all things, that sets the spirits of men on work against God and against one another every where, that hath deluged the world with an inundation of wickedness; what but the Spirit of the Lord can lift up a standard against it?

But that the apprehension of this matter may yet settle and fix more deeply with us; (for it is of great concernment that it should do so, that we may know whither to direct our eye;) let us but enumerate a little all the probable means besides that we can think of, which might make the times good; and think, how inefficacious and altogether to no purpose

they would be, without the Spirit of the Lord poured forth and working with mighty efficacy every where upon the spirits of men.

1. Think, what the preaching of the gospel would do. That, it must be supposed, will be very general, far more general than it is, to bring about such a state of things as we expect and hope for, before time end. But, alas! what would preaching do, if we could suppose it ever so general, while the Spirit of the living God restrains and withholds his influences? Indeed it is not to be supposed, that there could be a general preaching of the gospel amongst men, without the mighty work of the Spirit of God to prepare the way. But if there were, to how little purpose is our preaching, where that Spirit works not? We may as well attempt to batter strong walls with the breath of our mouths, as to do good upon men's souls without the Spirit of God. If there were preachers every where, that could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, what would it signify? "Do I persuade men?" saith the apostle. Alas! it is above us to persuade men; it is a matter of very great difficulty in things that are but of common concernment. How hard to alter the mind and will of a man, once set and bent already upon this or that thing of a secular nature, that hath reference only to earthly affairs! The heathens themselves have been taught by that light that hath shone amongst them, to attribute unto a deity the business of persuading men, to acknowledge it a numen* that ever comes to have a persuasive power over men's minds. When the Son of God himself was the preacher, how little was effected, till the

* A divinity, deity, or divine power.

time came of the Spirit's being so copiously poured forth! He that spake, his enemies being judges, so as never man spake! into whose lips grace was poured forth! his hearers wondering at the gracious words that proceeded from his mouth! astonished sometimes at his doctrine! for they could distinguish, and see, that "he taught with authority, and not as the scribes." Yet how little was done! All ended in the martyrdom of the preacher, and not long after in the destruction of the people for the greatest part. When that Spirit was poured forth, then thousands at a sermon were subdued and brought under by the power of the gospel: but it was not yet given in that plentiful measure, while as yet Jesus was not glorified. And if it had not been given upon Jesus's glorification, what could have enough fortified the hearts of these poor disciples, to undertake the converting of the world, the going to teach all nations, to proselyte mankind? How much, how unspeakably too big had such an attempt appeared for their undertaking, if a mighty Spirit had not come forth to raise them above themselves, to make them somewhat beyond men? How could they ever have thought of going about such a thing as that, wherein they were to be and actually were the successful instruments? Without it, what success could have been hoped for, howsoever attempted? Possibly it may be thought, that human endeavours might have done much at least towards the proselyting of mankind to the christian profession: so much might have been discovered of the reasonableness of that religion, as that it might have been thought fit, somewhat generally, so far as men could be dealt with, to entertain and embrace the christian

name. Truly even that was very unlikely; that it should have been ordinarily in the power of any rhetoric or of any reason, generally to persuade men to forsake a religion, wherein they had been bred and born, and which was delivered down to them from their forefathers, whether Jews or pagans. It was very unlikely, that mere argument should prevail so far on the world.

But suppose it did,

2. Consider what mere nominal christianity would do to the bettering of the world. What doth it now to the bettering of the state of things, where it obtains? Wherein are the nominal christians better than other men? Wherein are they better towards God and Christ? The case is apparent, that though atheism and infidelity be conquered in men's minds and understandings by the strength of reason or of education; yet, still the stronger fort in the heart remains inexpugnable, till the Spirit of the living God comes to deal effectually with the hearts of men: so that, consequently, there is as great enmity against God and Christ, even in the christian world as out of it. And wherein are men better in Christendom towards one another, than the pagans and mohammedans are? Wherein better? Where is there more deceit and fraud, more enmity and malice, more oppression and cruelty, than amongst the nominal christians? If we take true measures of the christian religion, and apprehend it to be what indeed it is; if we will say, that it is faith in God through Christ, or devotedness to God through Christ; or if we will say, that it doth consist, as no doubt in very great part it doth, in an imitation of Christ, in being like minded to Christ in purity,

heavenliness, spirituality, in self-denial, meekness, patience, peaceableness, aptitude to do good all that ever we can. If this be the christian religion, we may confidently say, that christianity hath not more bitter enemies in all the world than professed christians: I wish we could not say so. And where throughout this world have there ever been more bloody wars, fierce commotions, dreadful ruins and devastations, than amongst christians? Therefore think how little towards the bettering of the world and mending of the times nominal christianity doth or can do without the Spirit of God. The world is filled with plagues notwithstanding, and whatsoever tends to make it miserable, in those very parts where that obtains. But then,

3. It may be supposed, that these very judgments themselves might effect somewhat to the purpose, to calm and subdue men's spirits, and so bring about a more sedate and composed state of things at last. And most true indeed it is, that they are very apt means to that purpose. But means, you must still remember, are but means, and suppose an agent that is to use them; as a sword will not cut without a hand to manage it, and a proportionable hand. The inhabitants of the world should learn righteousness, when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, Isa. xxvi. 9. But do they? Do not we all know that nations, countries, towns, cities, may more easily be ruined than reformed, more easily be harassed and crushed all to pieces than purged? Do we need instances? We cannot find a more bright one than the nearest to ourselves, to our own view. If we do but cast an eye upon this very city,*

* London.

it hath been wasted by judgment upon judgment: think what the plague hath done, what the fire hath done, what poverty invading, as an armed man, here and there hath done. Is the city more reformed? grown more pious and serious? doth the life of religion appear more in it? Is it become more sober and just? Let this be seriously considered, and then think, what even judgments themselves, as severe as can be thought, are like to effect in the world without the Spirit poured forth. You have heard enough of the commotions and hurries of the world in other parts; but do you hear of its having grown much better, even in those parts? And admit that such judgments should sober men's spirits generally, and reduce them to more calmness, that men should by very weariness be at length brought to be at rest, and so a peaceable and prosperous state of things ensue; yet what would that alone do to make the times good?

4. What, I say, would a prosperous state of things do (meaning it only of external prosperity) to better the condition of the church of God? Such a good state of things for the church, must, as hath been said, first, and in the principal place, consist in the flourishing of religion, and then but secondarily in external tranquillity. What would the latter of these do without the former? And what would become of the former without the Spirit poured forth? If we have had ever such happy times in external respects, what would be the issue in reference to the state and condition of the church of God? We should then have, as was noted of old, golden chalices and wooden priests; the church would be a glorious sepulchre, splendid without, but full of

rottenness and corruption within. Would this better our case? It is very plain that there could be nothing more beside the purpose of mending the state of the church than prosperity, without a great measure of the Spirit. It would be good in suberviency, nothing in substitution; it might serve the Spirit, but cannot supply its place. Much might be done under the management of the Spirit by such a state of things towards the promoting and furthering of religion; but without that Spirit all would go to ruin. Religion would soon languish away and come to nothing, the sun of external prosperity would exhale the life, and spirit, and vigour of it, as experience has often shown that it has done heretofore. And what external prosperity can there be while the minds of men are so very various, divided into varieties of parties this way and that? There cannot be a prosperous state, while only one party is uppermost, and all the rest under oppression. When the church of God hath been in so divided a condition, have you ever known, or read, or heard of any such state of things, that hath been so favourable as to deserve to be called a prosperous state? If it hath been favourable to some, yet it hath, it may be, been equally or more unfavourable unto very many that perhaps were better men than those whom the times smiled upon. And so it cannot but still be, where there are many parties. Every party cannot be uppermost, and unless the Spirit of God new mould men's spirits, whatever party were uppermost, they would make it their business to crush, and vex, and disquiet all the rest. And can that be a state fit to be called prosperous? But,

5. That which the minds of many may be apt to run upon, is, that some very exact form of government in the church would be the specific, or rather the panpharmakon,* to cure all diseases in the church of God, and make a very happy time. A frame of things exactly squared according to their apprehension, they think, would soon do the business. The minds of many are apt to run much upon this project. But most forms that can be thought on have been tried; and what have they done, while the Spirit of God hath not animated the external form? Or what hope remains, that any thing could be done by an external, lifeless form, if ever so excellent and unexceptionable, ever so agreeable to rule? The expectation, that that would do the business is, as if a person were dangerously and extremely sick, even next to death, and any should go about to trim him up and dress him neatly, put on him a well-made suit, and expect that this should effect his cure. Alas! what needs there amongst us such curiosity for a dead thing? We are dead, the Spirit of God is retiring, retired in a very great degree. To what purpose would it be to shape and figure a dead thing this way or that? Just to as much purpose as the endeavour of him that we read of in Plutarch, who would fain erect a newly dead body in the posture of a living man; but alas! the legs yielded, the hands fell, the head dropped on one side, so that the poor defeated person was forced to cry out at last, "I find there is something wanting within; there wants a living soul to support and animate the frame." So it must be in our case too if there were ever so exact order. You may

* A universal medicine.

suppose from what was formerly said that order is a most excellent and desirable thing, and necessary to the prosperity of the church of God. But what is the order and frame of a thing that is dead? If a plot of ground should be laid out for a garden, square it ever so accurately, let it have ever so exact a figure, bestow upon it every thing of ornament that art can invent, yet if nature also do not do its part, if the sun never shine upon it, if no showers or dews ever descend, would it be, think you, a pleasant, flourishing garden? We have all of us reason to have done expecting much from lifeless, outward forms, even the best constitution imaginable; while a Spirit of life from above breathes not, despair that that will ever work miracles, or do any great things amongst us.

Besides, the best form of things that can be supposed, that is, such as would be more serviceable than others unto the ends and purposes which should be aimed at, to depress wickedness and keep things composed and in order, could never last long, if a Spirit from God do not animate it. Lust and wickedness, which it goes about to curb, and which might be less in some external fruits of it, so long as it should continue curbed, yet would grow too strong and break the bonds. As you know, that, let the body of a man be ever so comely and beautiful, and well proportioned, yet all that excellent structure and fabric will soon dissolve after death; beauty is gone all of a sudden, ghastliness succeeds in the room of it, and in time it will corrupt and putrefy within: and that corruption will break forth, so as to break the external frame, and cause part to drop from part. Therefore never expect a mere

external frame of things to better our case much or long, to do any miracles in that kind. And I may add, as that leads me,

6. That indeed the very power of working miracles itself, which is but an external means, would not better the world and men's spirits without the Spirit of God accompanying. It is true, indeed, they could not be wrought without that Spirit in the agent, but that would not do without the Spirit as a diffused soul. Many may be ready to imagine that if God would but do some very strange things amongst men, work many astonishing wonders, fill the world and the time with prodigies; then, whereas his memorial is in so great part extinct, these things would effectually convince men of their atheism and infidelity, and so all would be set right. But what did miracles do with the Jews of old? who were brought out of Egypt by a succession of miracles, by plague upon plague inflicted on the land of Egypt, till they were constrained to let Israel go! who were brought through the Red Sea by a most astonishing miracle, the sea dividing on the one hand and on the other, and their enemies pursuing destroyed, only by withdrawing that miraculous power, and letting the sea unite again! who were led through the wilderness by a continual miracle, the pillar of cloud and fire; and fed by another, manna, bread from heaven! who had the great God himself appearing with so stupendous a glory upon mount Sinai, speaking with the voice of words that six hundred thousand might hear at once the law, the ten words! Yet the body of that people lapse into idolatry, while the divine glory was in view before their eyes, and after it had been by so

dreadful a voice immediately before forbidden with the utmost severity. And their after ingratitude, infidelity, mutinies, rebellions, murmurings, testify how little miracles did amongst them. How little did they do in Christ's time, those whom he himself wrought; restoring hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb, and life to the dead? How little was effected, save only to heighten and aggravate the wickedness which showed itself so invincible?

All these are external things.

But if we should think of what is internal too, the common notions of religion; the practical dictates of natural conscience, that do more or less obtain every where amongst men; the light and knowledge, that comes by the gospel discovery, where that obtains; common prudence and respect to self-interest;—how little do these things do towards the composing of the world, and the bettering of the times! It is plain that light is more easily extinguished than lust. When it comes to a contest, when there is a competition between corruption and conscience; alas! how much more intent are men to mortify their consciences, than to mortify their corruptions! How feeble and impotent a thing is their light! all the light that shines doth but testify against them, rather than direct or reform them; and will do no more till the almighty Spirit go forth. And for that of prudence and respect to interest, which is the very thing that undoes men; that is, that every man will be prudent for himself, and mind a particular interest of his own; this fills the world with tumults and blood, with mischiefs and miseries every where: so that, that which

should be men's preserver, is their destroyer—even self-love.

The sum of all is this. This ought to make us despair, that ever we shall see a better world and state of things, till this blessed Spirit be poured down upon our heads. Without that, things will be growing worse and worse; it cannot be but they will do so: do not we see that they have done so? The Spirit is in a great measure gone, retired even from christian assemblies. When do we hear of the conversion of a soul, of any stricken and pierced to the heart by the word of God? And what is that like to come to, think we? what would it come to in this city, if always in a continued course the burials should exceed the births? Must it not be the very desolation of all at last? If we should speak of burials in a moral sense; alas! doth the number of converts equal the number of apostates? But take it in a natural sense, as all are dying; do we think that there are christians brought in, serious christians effectually become so, in any proportionable number to the deaths of good people amongst us? What doth this tend to, but the extinction of religion? And, not to speak of the rampant wickedness of those who have cast off all sense and fear of God and godliness, but only how those who profess religion degenerate and grow worse and worse, it is very dismal to think, how coldly affected they are towards religion, towards the ordinances of it, towards the divine presence; how eagerly they fly at the world, when the clouds gather so thick and black, and all things seem to conspire to a storm. Their ordinary business, all their business must go on just as it did, except that of souls, except that for

eternity and another world ; which must be neglected as it was wont to be. Is not this the case ? if there be opportunities of solemn prayer, of mourning and fasting, of putting in for a part and share of the expected mercy ; how do many, if we may not say the most of them, that profess religion amongst us, as it were disclaim their part ! for they will bear no part amongst them that cry for mercy. Think what this will come to, if the Spirit of the living God be still withheld, and do not awaken men and reduce their spirits to a better state. Despised ordinances, contemned worship, neglected seasons and opportunities of grace, how dreadful a testimony will they bear in the consciences of many, if once light should come to be extinguished amongst us, and all the frame of things, wherein they seem to take comfort, should be dissolved and shattered in pieces !

SERMON XV.

PREACHED OCTOBER 16, 1678.

It remains now to make some improvement of so great and important a subject, as we have been upon; the dependence of the happy state of the church of God upon the pouring forth of his Spirit: which shall be in certain practical notes or corollaries, that are deducible from the whole of what hath been opened to you. And we shall begin where we ended at the close of the last discourse.

1. Since the happiness of the church doth so immediately and necessarily depend upon a pouring forth of the Spirit, it must needs be of very dreadful import, when that Spirit retires; when there is a manifest suspension of its light and influence. Every gradual retraction of that Spirit speaks a vergency to death, to a total dissolution; as if the whole frame of the church were ready to drop asunder. It is a dismal thing when that which is the only light and life of it retires, visibly withdraws; when that Spirit breathes not as it hath done through the world, souls are not born by it unto God in a proportion to what hath been; considering that this is the only way of entering into God's kingdom, either in the initial or consummate state

of it, the kingdom of grace or the kingdom of glory. It is a dismal thing when conversions are grown rare, and inferior in number to apostacies. When christians are not born so fast as they die, whether in the moral sense or in the natural; for all die alike. This ought to be considered as a thing of dreadful import, when the Spirit works not as he hath been wont, for the rescuing of souls out of a precedent death. And further, when those who live languish; and much more when death insensibly creeps on them that have but a name to live: as you know it doth with many languishing persons, seizing one limb first and then another, so that the man is dead while he is alive. With how many is it so, who have lost themselves either in the cares or pleasures of this world, and are dead while they live! This it becomes us to consider as a most melancholy case. If all the happiness and weal of the church depends upon the pouring out of the Spirit, how dreadful is it, when there is a discernible retraction!

2. All our hope of good lying in the pouring forth of the Spirit, it is very strange that the retraction of it should not be considered with more sense; that we are not more apprehensive of so dismal a case as that is. It is a case exceedingly gloomy in itself, as hath been said; but how strange is it, that we should so little understand and consider it as such! that this should be our danger, lest God should be quite gone from amongst us before we know it! that life is retiring, but we perceive it not! Alas! with too many there is scarce life enough left to feel themselves die, or light enough to perceive that darkness is gathering upon them.

Strange that men should be dying, and say they are alive! Light is diminishing and blindness increasing and growing upon them, yet they say they see well and carry it as if nothing ailed them! This is a strange infatuation upon the minds of men, even of the professors of religion in our time. We keep up our wonted course while we can, our wonted forms and ways of worship; we assemble as we have been accustomed to do, we have praying and preaching and other ordinances of the gospel; but there is not the wonted Spirit, such appearances and demonstrations of the power and presence of the Spirit as formerly, and yet we seem not aware of it. We do as we have been wont at other times; but we find it not with our souls in what we do, as christians were used to find it. As it is said of that mighty man Samson; "He said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself, but he wist not that the Lord was departed from him," Judg. xvi. 20. So we seem not to know that the Lord is departing, but say, We will do as at other times. Indeed we reach not him; he said he would go forth and shake himself as at other times; we do not that, but as the complaint is in Isa. lxiv. 7. so is our case; there is none, scarce any, that stir up themselves to take hold of God; for, as it there follows, He hath hid his face from us, and consumed us; we are consuming, because of our iniquities. We are pining away, but not aware of it: grey hairs are here and there upon us, but we seem not to know it. We read concerning men in general in the dying hour, "No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death," Eccl. viii. 8. When the soul

must dislodge and be gone, no man can hold it; but they would if they could; men are loth to die; they would retain the spirit longer, if it were any way in their power. What strivings and strugglings for breath are there in dying men! but there seems with us hardly to be so much as that; O that we could retain the Spirit of life and grace! It is not indeed in our power, any more than to retain the departing, dislodging soul, when the hour is come that it must be gone. But it is strange that we should not be filled with complaint, that we should cross what is so common as to be a proverb, "Every thing would live," but it seems so would not we. When God, as it were, says to us by what he doth, (the most emphatical way of speaking,) "My Spirit shall not always strive," it shall no longer strive; for it is actually withheld from striving; yet we dread not this greatest of all threats, and when the threatening is enforced by a gradual execution, an execution already in a dreadful degree,—not to be afraid what this will come to, is very strange!

3. We further collect, that such a dismal state of things is likely immediately to forego the more eminent effusion of the Spirit, and the shining of the light of God's face, here spoken of. When the time approaches concerning which the text speaks, then a most dismal gloominess and darkness must be expected to precede. That is plainly implied, when it is said, "I will no more hide my face:" I have done it hitherto, but will not do it any more. It bespeaks that till the time of this eminent effusion, there was a very displeased hiding of God's face, and a great retraction and holding back of the Spirit. Other scriptures, that relate as I conceive

to the same eminent season, intimate also a dreadful foregoing desolation. The prophet Isaiah, chap. xxxii. describes the desolation of the christian church, (for I doubt not his prediction is ultimately meant of that) by the emblem of the land of Israel's lying waste, and the great city, the metropolis, being all ruined, the very houses of joy in the joyous city covered over with briers and thorns, ver. 13, 14. And thus it is said it should be, ver. 15. "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high;" then "the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest;" that which was before reckoned a fruitful field, shall now seem to have been but a wild forest, in comparison of the fruitfulness it shall now arrive at by the effusion of the Spirit. So that great pouring of it forth, in Ezek. xxxvii. meant no doubt of the same time with this in the text, is preceded by such a forlorn and desolate state of the church, that it is represented by the emblem of a slaughtered army covering all the ground about with dead carcasses, till the Spirit of life enter into them, bring bone to bone, cover them with flesh, and form them all into a regular army of living men again, ver. 1—14. It imports that almost a universal death, next to total, will be upon the church before this happy day. And do not we seem in a tendency thither? we seem to be descending gradually into the dark shady vale, the region of darkness and of death. Nor must we expect it to be silent darkness; no doubt it will rather imitate that of hell, a region turbid as well as dark. A night seems approaching that will be equally stormy and gloomy; for it is the season of God's anger. It is never to be thought that he will be

neutral towards us ; if he be not a friend, he will be an enemy ; when he ceases to be our light and life, and hope and joy, it cannot be but he must become an astonishing terror. “ Be not a terror unto me, thou art my hope ;” says the prophet, Jer. xvii. 17. When he is not the one, he must be the other. Are we prepared to meet him in such a way and in such a time ? It cannot but be a dreadful time, the time of managing his controversy. When he hideth his face in displeasure, that is not all ; it is not a bare hiding. Observe that passage in Deut. xxxi. 17. “ Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them :” and what then ? It follows, “ So that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us ? And I will surely hide my face in that day ;” as it follows again in ver. 18. This is to make a way for wrath ; and when you can see him no longer, you shall hear from him in a most terrible way.

The case of the christian church seems to be as Israel was represented, in Psalm cvi. 35, &c. “ They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works : and they served their idols, which were a snare unto them.” And ver. 39. “ Thus they were defiled with their own works,” (now they are called their own, since they had adopted them, and so made them their own,) “ and went a whoring with their own inventions.” What follows there, and what may we expect to follow in the like case ? For this the Lord “ abhorred his own inheritance,” ver. 40. Now take them who

will, they are an abomination to the Lord, he seems to care no more for them. As to the former part, is not this manifestly our case? The christian religion is in great part become paganish. We lately showed how little good nominal christianity doth to the world, where that only doth obtain. How plain is it that christianity hath let in paganism unto a dreadful degree! And now when the time of controversy comes, the day of recompense and year of vengeance, which is in God's heart, how terrible a day will that be! When that day comes which shall burn as an oven, and all the hemisphere, as it were, of the church be as a fiery vault! When "the Lord shall bathe his sword in heaven," as the expression is in Isa. xxxiv. 5. as it were drench it with vivid celestial fire, that it may pierce like lightning! When he shall whet his glittering sword, lift up his hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, Deut. xxxii. 40, 41. When he shall set himself to contest with the antichristian spirit, that hath lurked under the assumed and injurious pretence and profession of the christian name; the apostate, the worldly spirit, that hath entered into the church and wrought in it with such malignity; that spirit of envy, malice, hatred, bitterness; that profane, atheistical spirit, that spirit of hypocrisy and formality! When he shall come to a direct contest, and grapple with all among whom that spirit dwells and rules; how can we think but that will be a very dreadful day? and do we know how near it is? May it not, for aught we know, be even at hand? May we not be upon the very borders of that turbid darkness, in which all the rage of hell shall play its part, the spirits of

men be let loose, the devils not yet bound and ready to do their uttermost, when they know their time is short; the very hour and power of darkness, when all things shall conspire to make the church a chaos and place of confusion, when the elements shall be, as it were, commissioned to fight one another, and the powers of heaven shall shake? How are we prepared, in what posture, to enter into such a state as that is? It is a dismal thing to live a winter, a continual night, in such a place as you have heard to be toward the north pole: one would not do it, unless unavoidable necessity drove; and if one must, he would make provision for such a winter-night all that he could. How then are we provided for such a time?

4. We may note again hence, how adorable the power and greatness of that Spirit is, who can turn such a chaos, such a state of darkness, and horror, and confusion, into light and peace, into life and beauty, into harmony and glory. How adorable is that Spirit! How great and glorious should it be in our eyes upon that account! Let us use our thoughts as much as we will, we cannot make a too gloomy representation of the time just spoken of, wherein the Lord's face shall be hid, and the Spirit withheld. But when we have dwelt in the contemplation of the sadness and dismalness of that time a while, then what cause have we, and what advantage thence to take our rise to greaten and heighten our thoughts concerning this blessed almighty Spirit, who can make so happy a change as soon as it comes forth, as soon as the divine light shines again! What a change will it be! Amidst all those calamities that the church complains of, Psa. lxxx.

See where they apprehend the redress to be. "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved:" which is repeated no less than three times in the psalm, ver. 3. 7. 19. We are cured all of a sudden, all things are redressed, if thou do but turn us, and cause thy face to shine. How soon doth the appearance, the first visit of the sun of the horizon wherein we are, transform a region of darkness into pleasant light! Look upon that wretched state of things wherein the christian church is, and wherein we may well expect it farther to be, and in a deeper degree; if we think, that however when the Spirit is poured out, all is well, how adorable ought that Spirit to be to us! That mighty Spirit, who can even of a sudden new create the world, make new heavens and a new earth, diffuse its light and influence every where, clothe all with lustre and glory! And truly I believe we must be brought to have higher thoughts of the Spirit than we have, before we see such good days as we would wish we might. Alas! how diminishingly is it conceived and spoken of amongst us! We have the name of the Spirit or of the Holy Ghost many times in our mouths, when our hearts ascribe not honour to him. We glorify him not as God in our conceptions: no, the notions of our minds and dispositions of our hearts are with too many, as if we had not heard whether there be any Holy Ghost; or as if it signified a mere nothing with us. But it concerns us to greaten our thoughts concerning the Spirit of the living God. When it works as the Spirit of nature, it renews the face of the earth, replenishes all the region with life. What would this creation be, if all divine influence were retracted and withheld, by

which every thing lives, and which is attributed to the Spirit of God, as the active principle that works every where in the creation of the world, moving upon the abyss in the renewing of it from time to time! By him and from him there is such a thing as life in all the creation; he works all in all. But consider it also as a Spirit of holiness, of divine life and power in the spirits of men; what a mighty agent is that, who can spread such an influence every where, unto the remotest corners of this world! and can reach every heart of those that belong to God, and all at once; and pierce into them with such mighty power, that though all the art in the world cannot persuade and change the mind of a man, even in a matter of common concernment. if he be resolved, yet this Spirit can transform where it touches, and overcome, if it will, even in the first attempt! Oh! what homage should our souls within us pay to this almighty Spirit! In how prostrate a posture should we be! How should we adore that Spirit, who can, when he will, fill all, every where, with light and life!

5. We collect further, that the grace of the Spirit is most admirably condescending, that it will ever vouchsafe to come down into such a world as this is: that there should be a time, in which such a favour is designed, as this, "I will pour out my Spirit." Well may it be called the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of all goodness, and benignity, and sweetness, that it will ever vouchsafe to visit our world, a world so drenched in impurity, and so environed with malignant darkness. How well does the name agree, the Spirit of grace! So hellish is the malignity, that would despise such a Spirit. He is

called so on purpose, we may suppose, by the author to the Hebrews, to aggravate that malignity; "And hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29. But how magnificently glorious is that grace, which will finally overcome this malignity! That this Spirit will come down, and spread its light and influences through so much deformity, and pollution, and darkness, as is every where in this world; that it should become a soul unto such a world! What if an angel of God would humble himself to become a soul to a worm, to animate a worm! But a stranger humiliation far it is, that the Spirit of God should become, as it were, a soul to such a world as this! God says, "I have poured out my Spirit upon it," and now, "will no more hide my face:" it should put our hearts into raptures. How should we fall down and adore the Spirit of life and grace! Wilt thou do this? Wilt thou come down into such a world as this?

6. We may note further, that the face of God shall never shine, but where he doth pour out his Spirit. His face will always remain hid toward the church, till the time comes that he pours out his Spirit. It will be of good service to consider this. Many vainly promise themselves halcyon days without the consideration of any influence of the Spirit connected with it; as if the aspects of providence could be favourable to them, and they could do well enough without the Spirit. If we can but enjoy peace and tranquillity, free trade and liberty to walk without check or control in the ways that we like best, though without the other; yet we are apt to think, that our happiness would be sufficiently provided for. But we are not to expect that the aspects

of providence will be favourable, without a concurring effusion of the divine Spirit. It is neither likely to be ; nor would be to any good purpose, if it should.

It is not likely to be ; for why should we suppose it should ? What is the church of God, when the Spirit is withdrawn and gone ? What are they that call themselves of it, more than other men ? If the Spirit be gone, what is it but an Aceldama ? a Golgotha ? a place of skulls, a place of carcases ? Do we think, that the divine glory shall only serve to adorn sepulchres ? That the more glorious and pleasing aspects of providence shall only serve for that ? You cannot long sever and keep off from death internal rottenness and corruption. And surely it is very unlikely, that God should take pleasure to discover himself and to display his glory among such, in the more remarkable works of his favourable providence. And to what purpose would it be, if he should ? What should we be the better for a state of external tranquillity and peace, if the Spirit be withheld ? Surely you will think religion to be necessary at least to the church ; otherwise what distinguishes that from another community of men ? But what a sad frame of religion must there be, if the Spirit of God be not in it ! We cannot call that state prosperous to the church wherein the Spirit breathes not, unless sensuality will be the felicity of the church ; unless we think ourselves warranted to abandon all care of the soul, and the belief of immortality and of a world to come, as if these were only mistakes and delusions. For great external prosperity to the church without the Spirit accompanying it, commonly issues in irreligion. That

alone deserves to be esteemed a good state of things for the church of God, wherein the people of God every where are working and framing for a blessed eternity : and that they will never be without much of the divine Spirit.

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